Mexican Immigration to the Hull House and 18th Street

Community Areas of Chicago, Illinois, 1910-1960.

MEXICAN IMMIGRATION TO THE HULL HOUSE AND 18TH STREET COMMUNITY AREAS OF CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, 1910-1960

by

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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this study to all the generations of working class Mexicanos whose strength, determination and stamina have literally aided in the tremendous growth and expansion of this huge megalopolis, Chicago. In addition, I wish to make special mention of my own extended "Familia". They epitomize the immigrant experience of Mexicanos to Chicago, who after three generations are adamantly clinging to "La Cultura". This tenacity is personified by the matriarchal head of my "familia," who after 50 years of living in and out of this country proudly proclaims her ethnicity.

> ...y seguimos pensando que somos
> Mexicanos, aunque vivemos on este
> paiz.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

This study is a brief history of the Mexicanos and Chicanos from about 1910-1960 in the Hull House and 18th Street communities of Chicago. Little contemporary research has been done in these areas,[1] although in the period under study the Hull House area contained the oldest and the largest of Chicago's Mexican "Colonias." The 18th Street community is included not only because today it is the single largest Mexicano settlement in Chicago but because it is the author's contention that this community is the progeny of the older Hull House "Colonia."

Today, the expansion of the Mexicano community, stimulated by a tremendous upsurge in immigration, has in turned transformed the community known as 26th Street into an extension of the 18th Street community. While the City of Chicago chooses to clearly divide these neighborhoods into the Pilsen (18th Street) and Little Village (26th Street) communities, they are nonetheless a single entity. Finally, on a more personal note, my interest in these areas rests on the premise that I myself am a product of the three aforementioned communities.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the social, economic and cultural aspects of the Mexicanos in these areas in historical perspective. This includes the impact of immigration and its social consequences. Propelled by various forces Mexicanos crossed "la frontera" and traveled to the industrial north. In Chicago they encountered the same forces of racism and exploitation which had greeted earlier immigrants. As expendable commodities they were offered only the hardest, dirtiest and lowest paying jobs: in essence work that no one else wanted. For the most part unskilled, unprepared or trained in skills ill-suited for employment, the

Mexican worker was soon found to honest and hard working. This virtue, coupled with their dexterity and perseverance, earned them recognition and respect. If this image had not been projected earlier it was due to prejudices, misinformation or lack of information. Therefore this study challenges the unfounded stereotype of the lazy, immoral, dirty, cowardly and simple Mexicano. In its stead emerges a heterogeneous group of bronzed people, strong, proud, honest, hard working and dignified who were and are determined to make a better life for themselves, their families and their "paisanos."

This study is primarily intended as an overview and is not to be considered comprehensive. Limitations of time and scarcity of materials were major problems. Yet in my research, I emerged with the distinct impression that although materials are scattered, fragmented and incomplete, they nonetheless exist. For example, up to 1942, fifty-one Spanish language newspapers and periodicals were printed in Chicago.[2] Of this total thirteen were summarized and translated.[3] Another eight can be found at the University of California at Berkeley. In all thirty newspapers are completely unaccounted for.

Another case in point is my personal acquisition of the monthly, Vida Latina. In publication for eleven years (1952-1963), it occupied offices in both the Hull House and 18th Street communities. To my knowledge no library or depository of any nature possesses any copies. The Library of Congress at one time did have some issues but decided not to retain them.[4] These examples are indicators of numerous research possibilities. It is my belief that a thorough and intensive amount of "tracking" will produce many of these "lost" materials. I anticipate that this will entail much

legwork and the tedious chore of rummaging through personal collections. Not until a significant amount of these sources are "discovered" can a definitive study of this nature be accomplished. It is hoped that this study will stimulate interest and promote research. In doing so it would accomplish my salient goal of helping fill the historical void of a long neglected people.

Within the content of this study I will be using the term Chicano to refer to those people of Mexican descent who were born in the United States. The term Mexicano will be used to describe those people who were born in Mexico and who emigrated to the United States to work and live.

CHAPTER II

"La Communidad"

Some Characteristics of the Mexican Neighborhood

A simple excursion down "las calles diesocho y viente sies," (18th and 26th Street) will convince one of its dense concentrations of Mexicanos and Chicanos. On weekends, the thoroughfares are rendered nearly impassable with the sheer number of pedestrians and automobiles. Both communities are filled with "Mexican" stores, shops and various businesses whose products or services fill the needs of the Mexicano and Chicano resident.

Grocery stores stock all items necessary to prepare "platillos mexicanos." Fruits, vegetables, cheeses, candies, cookies and a wide array of canned goods are imported from Mexico. Towards the rear of the store, in the butcher shop various Mexican-favored meats are amply stocked. Other products produced on the premises include Chicarrone, Carnitas, Carne Adobado, Chorizo, Barbacoa and Menudo. Noticeably missing is the chile powder that is used extensively by the Chicanos in the Southwest. Instead fresh chiles Ancho or Mulatto are used. Tortillas, long the staple of the Mexican people, are manufactured by different local tortillerias. Combined they produce a total of dozen tortillas.

Restaurants are also attuned to the wants and needs of their clientele. Here one finds truly authentic Mexican dishes. In the 18th or 26th Street communities there is neither the need nor preference to adjust the flavor or spiciness of foods to satisfy the Anglo-American palate. In addition to the standard "platillos nacionales" one can find many restaurants that specialize in state and regional dishes.

Housing in the 18th Street (Pilsen) community is dominated by two, three and four story tenements. Rear tenements are commonplace. There are few grassy yards. Shrubs and trees are sparse. The majority of these buildings were erected prior to 1902.[5] Long known as a port of entry for new immigrants, this area had been almost exclusively occupied by Bohemians. At its apex, between 1905-1910, some forty-five thousand Bohemians were living in Pilsen.[6] This population density was made possible by the fact that almost 50% of the buildings contained five or more apartments.[7] Both its size and ethnic make-up deemed that this area be called "Pilsen," after the second largest city in Bohemia.

To the southwest, in the 26th Street (Little Village) community, housing was built from the 1920's through the late 1940's. Two-story edifices predominate with an intermingling of three-story buildings. Throughout the area, single dwelling homes begin to appear. Their frequency increases as one continues southwest. The majority of homes have grassy yards and by comparison with the 18th Street area, trees and shrubs are in abundance.

In the early 1960's the City of Chicago decided to sound the death-knell upon the Hull House community. Three major construction projects were designated for the area; a new university campus, urban renewal "housing projects" and a network of expressway interchanges. The net result was a drastic decrease in housing units. Since the Hull House community bordered the 18th Street area on the north, many Mexicanos chose to make the short jaunt and establish residence there. This flight from the bulldozer, coupled with an increase of Mexican immigration and Chicano migration, resulted in the creation of the largest concentration of

Mexicanos and Chicanos outside the Southwest.

The dramatic influx of population served to stimulate the ever expanding perimeters of the Mexicano community. Within the decade 1965-1975 it engulfed the entire 26th Street community. As is evident in Map 1, it can be readily observed that the 18th Street and 26th Street communities form one continuous Mexicano/Chicago settlement. Even today its borders are in constant flux. Recently the suburb of Cicero, ill-famed for its violently racist attacks upon prospective Black homeowners in the fifties and sixties has witnessed the arrival of significant numbers of Mexicanos and Chicanos. It is interesting to note that the Mexicanos' residential moving patterns are in the footsteps of their predecessors, the Bohemians.[8] Initially arriving in the Hull House area they have both moved southwesterly to 18th Street, 26th Street and eventually into the adjacent suburbs of Berwyn and Cicero.

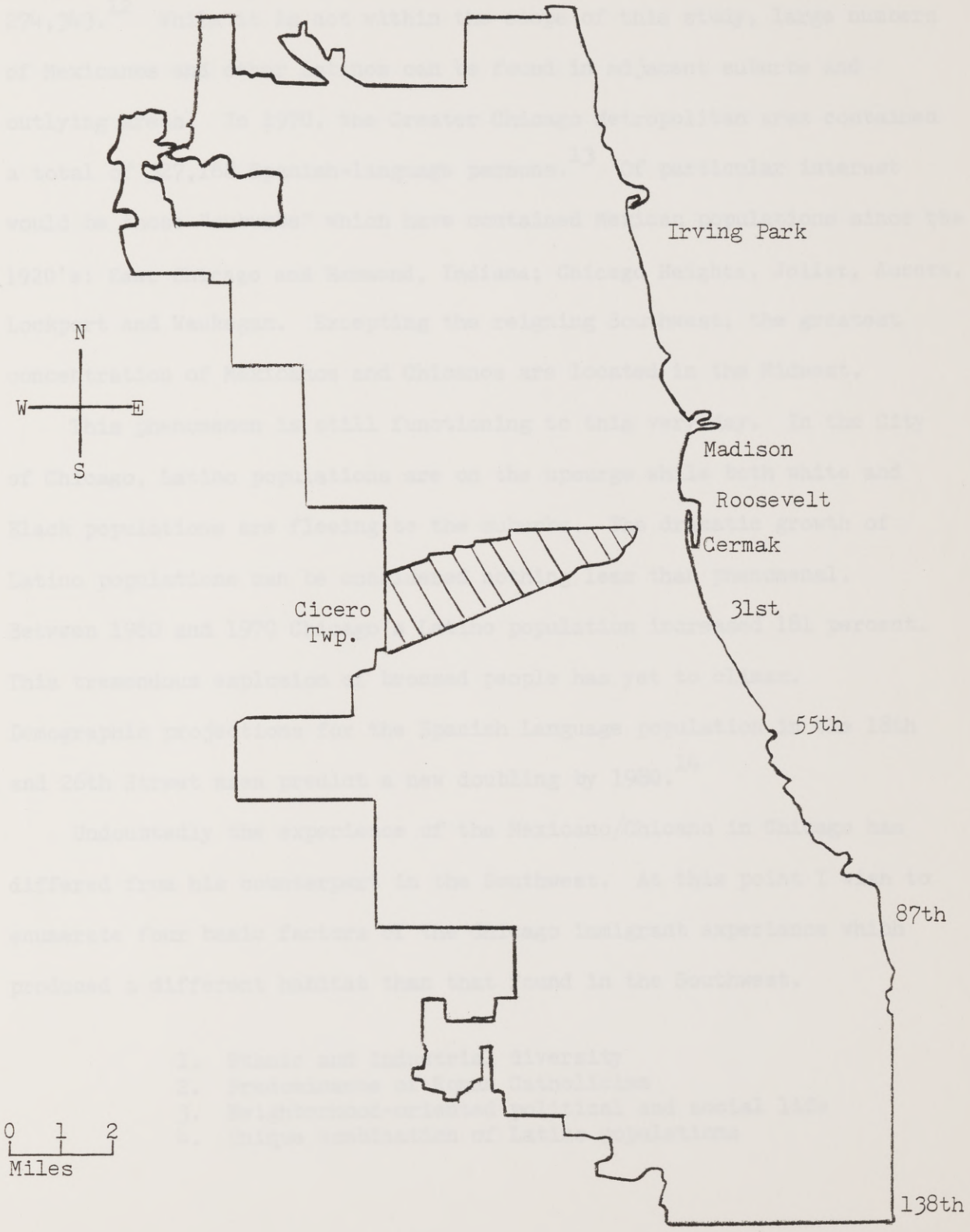
Densely populated, this Mexicano/Chicano corridor cuts a swath across the city some 5 miles long and 1½ miles wide. Within its municipal boundaries, according to the official census of 1970, Chicago has the fourth largest urban Mexicano/Chicano population in the United States. As an entity the 18th and 26th community contains a total Spanish language population of 39,762.[9] That immigration is still quite prevalent is evident in the fact that 55.6 percent of the persons in this area are of foreign stock; two-thirds were born either in Mexico or are second generation Mexicano.[10] This demographic profile clearly dispels the notion that Mexicanos and Chicanos are confined to the Southwest.

Further enhancing these statistics is Chicago's sizeable population of other "Spanish speaking," largely Puerto Rican but also Cubans, South

MAP 1

Mexican Settlements of Chicago, 1978:

The 18th and 26th Street Community Areas



and Central Americans. This group in 1970 totalled 143,000.[11] In the same year, Mexicanos, Chicanos and other Latinos combined totalled 274,343.[12] While it is not within the scope of this study, large numbers of Mexicanos and other Latinos can be found in adjacent suburbs and outlying areas. In 1970, the Greater Chicago Metropolitan area contained a total of 327,168 Spanish-language persons.[13] Of particular interest would be those "suburbs" which have contained Mexican populations since the 1920's: East Chicago and Hammond, Indiana; Chicago Heights, Joliet, Aurora, Lockport and Waukegan. Excepting the reigning Southwest, the greatest concentration of Mexicanos and Chicanos are located in the Midwest.

This phenomenon is still functioning to this very day. In the City of Chicago, Latino populations are on the upsurge while both white and Black populations are fleeing to the suburbs. The dramatic growth of Latino populations can be considered nothing less than phenomenal. Between 1960 and 1970 Chicago's Latino population increased 181 percent. This tremendous explosion of bronzed people has yet to climax. Demographic projections for the Spanish Language population in the 18th and 26th Street area predict a new doubling by 1980.[14]

Undoubtedly the experience of the Mexicano/Chicano in Chicago has differed from his counterpart in the Southwest. At this point I wish to enumerate four basic factors of the Chicago immigrant experience which produced a different habitat than that found in the Southwest.

1. Ethnic and industrial diversity
2. Predominance of Roman Catholicism
3. Neighborhood-oriented political and social life
4. Unique combination of Latino populations

In many ways the experience of the Mexicano in Chicago were similar to those of the European immigrant. Yet, unlike these earlier immigrants, the Mexicanos were able to retain much more of their cultural heritage. This they accomplished in spite of the eroding influences of an urban environment and the long distance which separated them from their cultural origins. The primary reason for this phenomenon was the continual reinforcement of traditions by an incoming stream of immigrants who slowed down the acculturation process.

TABLE 1

Chicano Populations of Los Angeles, San Antonio,

Houston, Chicago: 1940, 1950, 1970

	1940	1950	1970
Los Angeles	108,000	157,000	361,806
San Antonio	---	165,000	284,075
Houston	---	36,000	110,707
Chicago	16,000	24,000	108,000

Source: Kerr, The Chicano Experience in Chicago, p.8

CHAPTER III

Immigration to the United States

Push-Pull Factors

The border dividing Mexico and the United States is, for the most part, an invisible line that has done little to deter the daily flow of people crossing to and fro. Social, economic, cultural, and political interests bind the northeastern region of Mexico to the southwestern region of the United States. A result is the movement of people with almost the same facility as if one was traveling within one nation.

Previous official policy did little to control this situation. At the turn of the century the Immigration and Naturalization Service frankly declared that it had, "No means of knowing just how many immigrants crossed."[15] Manpower to patrol the border was virtually nonexistent: in 1907 one inspector had the task of supervising the entire Mexican border.[16] As late as 1923 only sixty mounted men were stationed along the 1900-mile boundary.[17] When serious concern over immigration arose, it was primarily the result of "illegal" Chinese and Japanese immigration from Mexico.[18] In sum, prior to the formulation and enforcement of immigration laws Mexicanos had grown accustomed to unrestricted travel. One did not need official sanction from the U.S. government; oftentimes the payment of a 5¢ toll was the only requirement.[19]

Because the Department of Immigration and Naturalization has been inept in maintaining accurate records of Mexican immigration, the accumulated statistics are inaccurate and miscalculated. The problem is intensified when one considers the staggering numbers of Mexicanos who enter the United States "illegally." This problem became particularly acute when restrictive legislation was passed and existing laws were

meticulously enforced. Literacy requirements, prolonged waiting periods and a marked increase in the actual fees imposed upon the immigrants contributed to the inevitable, an explosive upsurge of undocumented entries.

With this in mind one views official U.S. government data with caution. Actual immigration figures may be undercounted anywhere from 20% - 50%. Methodologically the government has failed to consider the salient issues and causes of undocumented entries. As such, it has either ignored or has failed to calculate or adjust for the huge numbers of real human beings who out of need, were forced to enter "illegally." For an example of this gross undercounting, see Table 1.

In the second decade of this century two events prompted a mass northward exodus of Mexicanos; World War I and the Mexican Revolution. This dramatic rise in immigration occured not only during these events but more so following their aftermath. In 1916, due to the World War, the United States was suffering from scarcity of labor. European immigration was not feasible under wartime conditions. As evidenced by the unilateral exclusion acts, Asian labor was not wanted and while an active campaign to recruit southern Black labor had been conducted for several years, the demand still surpassed the supply. Industrial America turned to the seemingly logical choice, Mexico.

In those War years Congress debated the question of Mexican immigration.[20] After much heated discussion it was agreed to admit Mexican labor on a temporary basis. This wartime policy was a precursor to the later bracero programs. Compelled by absolute need, it contained racist overtones. In attempting to choose between the Oriental and the Mexican

TABLE 2

Mexican Immigration to the United States, 1910-1930.

	*To U.S.A. (U.S. Sources)	To U.S.A. (Mexican Sources)
1910	17,760	--
1911	18,784	59,198
1912	22,001	85,110
1913	10,954	50,105
1914	13,089	11,003
1915	10,993	10,123
1916	17,198	49,932
1917	16,438	25,758
1918	17,602	41,139
1919	28,844	55,162
1920	51,042	59,316
1921	29,603	22,117
1922	18,246	48,795
1923	62,709	100,562
1924	87,648	78,490
1925	32,378	65,336
1926	42,638	60,282
1927	66,766	87,979
1928	57,765	75,440
1929	38,980	--
1930	11,915	--

The dates for 1910, 1929 and 1930 are not available.
* Legal entries only.
Source: Romo, "Responses to Mexican Immigration."

immigrant, it was decided that the temporary Mexican immigrant "was a lesser racial evil than the permanent Oriental."[21]

Like the rest of the country, Chicago was suffering from a labor shortage, especially in her principal industries of steel, meatpacking and railroads. The first documented employment of a sizeable number of Mexican workers in Chicago dates from 1916 when the railroad recruited 206 Mexican laborers. That railroads initiated this recruitment was logical. They not only provided employment and transportation from the point of entry, but the earlier thrust of railroad trunk lines into central Mexico had provided inducement and access by which a perspective immigrant could travel to the border.[22] A precedent had been established as early as the 1880 s when Mexicans had been employed by railroads to lay track in both Mexico and Southwestern United States.[23] In effect, railroad work was an established norm for many Mexican workers; they were not only acquainted with the duties of such employment but in many cases had prior exposure to the United States.

This ease of mobility made the trip to the "frontera" quick and relatively cheap. As stated earlier, supervision by U.S. immigration authorities was virtually nil. Regulatory measures on the border were so loose that in 1920 one inspector reported:

> with assurance . . . that practically any alien desirous of entering the United States and possessed of ordinary intelligence and persistence could readily find the means of so doing without the fear of detection.[24]

Mexican immigrant labor was so commonplace that some employers merely took "it for granted that any Mexican has a right to cross the border anytime without saying anything to anybody."[25]

Almost from the moment he set foot on U.S. soil the immigrant would be literally besieged with offers of employment by enganchistas (labor contractors). For the greater part, Mexican contract labor was recruited in El Paso, San Antonio, and Fort Worth. From these centers workers were contracted for employment in the Midwest.[26] Competition for labor was so fierce that the illegal practice of conducting recruiting in Mexico was not unusual.[27] A contemporary observer noted the various ploys utilized by these labor agents.

> Scouts are sent into the interior of Mexico to spread propaganda about good wages, improved living conditions and means of entertainment, and what is more harmful, they lead the plain Mexicans to believe that they will enjoy a great deal of social advantages and a degree of equality in this wonderful land.[28]

Another case reveals the unscrupulous nature of Chicago-based labor agents who traveled to Monterrey and showed pictures of beautiful houses which they promised the railway company would supply.[29] These practices were not necessarily limited to Anglo recruiters. Either Mexicanos, Chicanos or both engaged in this lucrative trade. "These scouts are Mexicans and many of the agencies are conducted by Mexicans."[30] It is difficult to ascertain the true native origin of these "Mexicans" since it was a widespread practice to address <u>all</u> persons of Mexican ancestry as "Mexicans." Therefore in spite of U.S. nativity, Chicanos were nonetheless labeled as "Mexicans."

Mexican labor was so much in demand that it prompted rivaling employment agencies to pursue their recruiting activities with unrestrained zeal. In some cases the competition for the newly arrived immigrant was so great that it precipitated some rather unethical methods

of "stealing" a laborer from another industry.

> A practice of the mills and foundries in Pennsylvania was to offer higher wages to the men brought in by the railroads, even now these concerns distribute literature printed in Spanish among the Mexican being brought northward under contract by the Sugar companies, trying to lure them into deserting their employees and coming to work in the Steel Mills.[31]

There are also indications that many Mexicans contracted for railroad work merely to take advantage of free transportation. Upon their arrival in the North they would abandon their railroad jobs and seek better employment.[32] These two factors, the siphoning of labor and desertion, resulted in the tendency of the railroads to have high turn-over rates.

The draw to the industrial north was so intense that it was creating a vacuum of labor in the Southwest. One Texan cotton grower lamented, "all they have got in their heads is Chicago or Detroit."[33] Even forceful restraints proved futile:

> We used to take their shoes and hats and put them in another house, but they got away from us anyway . . . and we used to even guard each door of the houses they slept in on a big farm. We used to put wives separate from the husbands, but the men left their wives to come north.[34]

The Mexican Revolution was the other major factor that served as an impetus for immigration. This series of violent upheavals bred new social and economic conditions that drastically disrupted Mexican society. One result of the revolution was a tremendous exodus of people fleeing political persecution, military impressment, depressed economic conditions, or simply the crossfire of violent events. Concern for the safety and welfare of one's family prompted many a departure.

As recounted by an immigrant who eventually made East Chicago her home:

> My father sent all of us from Chihuahua in 1913. He stayed behind taking care of his business, but my mother, my sister and myself, we all went to El Paso to live. My father had heard of what the Villistas were doing to young girls and was afraid for us. My father finally joined us in El Paso where he set up another real estate business.[35]

Another interview with a Mexican Steel worker from East Chicago recalled the danger of impressment.

> Some soldiers came riding near the rancho which belonged to my father. One of them asked me to take care of his horse, and then proceeded to tell me that I should go with him as his orderly. I had no such desire, but I had seen another boy given a severe beating by these Villistas and so I agreed. They gave me a horse, but as a pretext I received permission to go and get my belongings. I ran off towards my sister's house and hid in the pig sty. I remained there for the whole night until I was certain that the soldiers had made tracks. I was always very cautious after that whenever I saw any soldiers.[36]

While many did flee from personal danger the greater majority of immigrants left Mexico as a result of the consequences of war rather than the direct pressures of military campaigning.[37] By 1916 the repercussions of the war were being felt throughout the Republic. Ravaged fields produced little food. Hunger was everywhere as evident in the following testimonial.

> During the war, all the cattle disappeared, and there was nothing to eat except maguey heart and nopales. They are nutritious, you could fry them and with salt, if there was salt, it became our constant diet. Life on our rancho became impossible. In 1916 I went to Tampico when I became old enough to fend for myself.[38]

Such conditions spurred a flight of refugees which reached tremendous proportions. In 1915, during one week the governor of Nuevo Leon organized train trips that transported 5,000 destitute refugees to Laredo and San Antonio.[39]

The sum total of those factors which prompted migration are perhaps best categorized and exemplified by an early immigrant.

> En primer lugar, nos venimos nostros porque la vida estaba dura para mantenernos y en segundo lugar, nos venimos por la Revolucion . . . .[40]

CHAPTER IV

"Al Norte" Regional Origins and Migratory Patterns: A Composite Profile of the Immigrant.

The central plateau of Mexico was the prime contributor of Mexican immigrants to Chicago. At least sixty percent of them came from states of Jalisco, Guanajuato, or Michoacan.[41] The principal cities, towns or municipalities in these states contributed significant proportions of immigrants. For example, of those immigrants from Michoacan, 24% were from the city of Zamora.[42] This phenomena can be partially explained in terms of "enganchista" policy that may have been intense in one town and completely ignored in another.[43] Contrary to popular belief, the immigrants from this region were not of the "most penurious class."[44] It was simply not feasible for the destitute to procure the money needed for the northward journey. The dominant strain of the immigrant was of the upper-lower classes and from the rural, non-industrial sections of the central plateau.[45]

Prior to the 1920s, the migratory pattern to the midwest was of a highly mobile and transient nature. This was a by-product of railroad[46] and sugar beet employment. These two industries provided the access and geographical mobility, while serving to prepare the immigrant for the rigorous schedules and demands of life in the urban midwest. Repeatedly the migratory lifestyle of the Mexican immigrant was a reflection of these two aforementioned industries.

> The J family came to Houston, Texas in 1922 and Mr. J worked on the railroad tracks for two seasons. A labor contractor from a Michigan Sugar Beet Company provided the family with railroad passes to the beet fields, good for return before December, 1923. When the season

TABLE 3

Origins of Mexican Immigrants to Chicago Area,

1920-1935 (Sample Size: 1016)

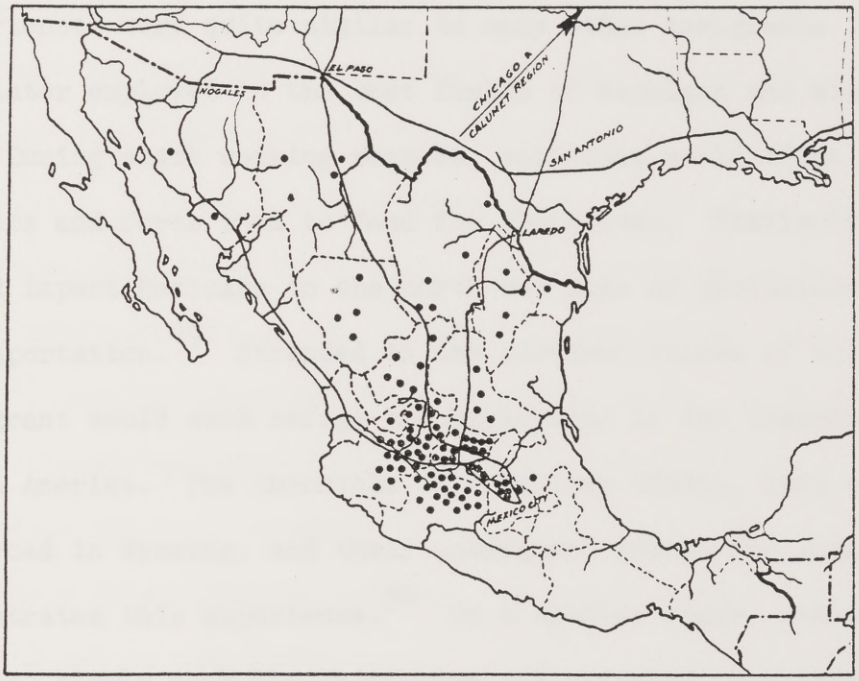
	Number	Percent
Michoacán	260	25.5
Guanajuato	214	21.6
Jalisco	201	18.9
Mexico, D.F.	68	6.7
Nuevo Leon	48	4.7
Coahuila	40	3.9
San Luís Potosi	34	3.3
Zacatecas	31	3.0
U.S. Origins	30	3.0
Chihuahua	21	2.1
Durango	18	1.7
Aguascalientes	17	1.6
Tamaulipas	16	1.5
Other Mexican states	13	1.2

Source: Rosales, "Regional Origins of Mexicano Immigrants to Chicago during the 1920s."

MAP 2

Origins of Mexican Colony, Chicago and the

Calumet region, 1919-1930



Source: Paul S. Taylor, Mexican Labor in the United States: Chicago and the Calumet Region. 1932. New York: Arno, 1970, p. 43

one dot = 1 percent.

> in the beet fields ended, friends told of opportunities of work in Chicago, so instead of returning to Texas they came here. Mr. J found work as a track laborer.[47]

In the same vein, Mr. Jesus Carlin, a Texano and long time resident of Chicago, recalled his childhood experiences of moving throughout the state of Kansas with his father who worked for the railroad. His migratory experiences were quite similar to many other immigrants in that his family was later employed in the beet fields of Michigan and Wisconsin.[48]

During slack working seasons, railroads would often simply discharge workers and force them to fend for themselves. Similarly, beet companies would import Mexicans to the north but made no provisions for return transportation.[49] Stranded in the northern climes of this country, the immigrant would seek refuge and employment in the industrial sectors of urban America. The chronicle of a Mexican family, laid off by the railroad in Wyoming, and their subsequent search for employment in Chicago illustrates this experience.[50] On a smaller scale, small groups of workers simply took the initiative and traveled to midwestern cities on their own.[51]

The influx of Mexican labor served to further catalyze immigration. Friends and relatives soon communicated the enticing message back home; well-paid jobs were available. The response to this call for labor was a flood of immigration of tidal proportions. By 1923 the exodus from Mexico was so great that the Mexican National Railway increased their northerly service.[52] In March of that year the port of Juarez alone witnessed the arrival of 1000 prospective immigrants.[53]

The interlocking mechanism responsible for the importation of Mexican workers to the midwest were the employment agencies or "enganchistas."

The operatives of these labor agents were such that they presaged the wholesale immigration of Mexicans directly from "La frontera," as well as from the interior of Mexico, to the urban midwest. During a six-month period in 1923, Texas employment agencies provided 34,588 Mexicans for non-agricultural jobs in the Midwest and Pennsylvania.[54] Excepting beet work, agriculture was not a large employer of Mexicans in the Midwest.[55] Mexicans did comprise the majority of beetworkers, in 1926 one sugar beet company alone transported 3,048 laborers from Texas to Michigan.[56] In Pittsburgh, a labor agency delivered to a railroad a monthly quota of 500 Mexicans. The quest for higher wages and better working conditions inevitably resulted in the railroad's excessively high turnover rate of 80%.[57] Many of these ex-railroad workers later became steel workers.[58]

A classic example of the migratory pattern which eventually ended in the steel mills is recounted by Maria de Jesus Medel-Pulido. A native of San Diego de Alejandria, Jalisco, her initial entry occurred in 1911 which brought her entire family to San Antonio. There her father by a street car company for four years. In 1915 an "enganchista" contracted the family to go to St. Louis, Missouri. The years 1917-1919 saw her family in nearby Granite City, Illinois where her father worked for the American Steel Company. After a two-year sojourn in attempting to share-crop some land, they were contracted for beet work in Colorado. In 1923 this family responded to the beckoning of the resurging steel industry and returned to Granite City.[59] In this family one can observe the movement of Mexican workers correlating directly to the country's industries and economic conditions. This is evident in the initial entry date, working in steel during the World War boom years, returning to Texas during the

recession of 1921-1922, and their eventual return to the steel mills during the economically prosperous year, of 1923.

The recession of 1921-1922 is a prime example of the close association between the nation's fluctuating economics and its resultant effect upon Mexican workers. While unemployment was commonplace throughout the nation, especially hard-hit were the Mexicans. In urban areas, unemployment among Mexican workers reached epidemic proportions.[60] In 1921 approximately one-third of the Mexican workers at Inland Steel were left without a job.[61] In Detroit, economic reversals prompted Henry Ford to provide free transportation back to Mexico for 3,000 of his Mexican employees.[62] Immigration was reduced to a trickle, in 1921 approximately 9,000 entered the United States while 106,000 returned to Mexico.[63] The recession's severity, coupled with increased violence against Mexicans prompted Alvaro Obergon, president of Mexico in 1921, to sign a decree during March prohibiting emigration.[64] Undoubtedly, this revolving door policy of cordially welcoming Mexican labor followed by an abrupt halt to immigration and repressive expulsion has been practiced upon the Mexican immigrant repeatedly.

As indicated, the steel industry played a crucial role in facilitating the arrival of Mexican labor to the Midwest. In 1923 the Bethlehem Steel Company of Pennsylvania recruited some 1,000 Mexican workers.[65] Parallel with the railways and sugar beet companies, large scale recruiting was done via the omnipresent labor agent. The experience of one immigrant testifies to the recurring symbiotic relationship between the railroad and steel.

> In 1921 I happened to be in Ciudad Juarez right across the line from El Paso. There I fell in with an enganchista from the Santa Fe. I went to work for the Santa Fe and in a year's time I was in Kansas City. When the work gave out there I went back to El Paso. There, in the spring of 1923 I fell in again with another enganchista. He represented some steel mill people in Illinois. I came to Illinois in a special train with hundreds of other Mexican laborers who had been picked up like myself.[66]

This testimonial shows the especially prosperous conditions of 1923. In addition, it is significant to note the locality where the recession of 1921/1922 was withstood.

The precedent of hiring large numbers of Mexicans for steel employment occurred in 1917 when Inland Steel of East Chicago, Indiana, recruited some 900 workers.[67] Utilized as strikebreakers, Mexicans were also important in replacing strikers at the Illinois Steel Company of South Chicago.[68] The Mexican government was aware of this situation and discouraged strikebreaking by taking steps to educate Mexican workers in the principles of trade unionism.[69] This concern for nonunion Mexican workers later climaxed when unions of both countries began negotiations to resolve these "problems" as each saw fit.[70]

It is imperative that one recognize the often repeated practice of using newly arrived ethnic groups as strikebreakers. Mexican strikebreakers were only the last group of immigrants to be utilized in this manner. Their predecessors had included Poles, Lithuanians, and Blacks.[71] Nonetheless, as with Black strikebreakers, Mexicans had fomented racial bitterness and animosities. That violence was anticipated is evident in the steel corporation's decision to house the Mexicans within the steel compounds.[72] When union disputes were settled, Inland

Steel began employing Mexicans with unrivaled intensity. Approximately 3,600 Mexicans were hired by Inland between 1919 and 1925. Throughout the 20s thirty percent of Inland's seven thousand employees were Mexicans.[73] These employment practices made Inland Steel the largest employer of Mexican labor in the United States during the 1920's.[74] By 1926 Chicago area steel mills employed over 6,000 Mexicans, some 14% of their total work force. These significant proportions of Mexican workers in the Midwest are clearly indicative of America's need of immigrants. The basic impetus for migration was undoubtedly economic, yet the relative abundance of jobs and the zealous nature in which America's industries competed for his labor reflect a certain degree of dependence on Mexican labor.

These labor recruitment drives had several far reaching ramifications; in the interior of Mexico the availability of work in the midwest became commonly known. In turn, the immigrant plotted his route from his home directly to the midwest. For many, the quest for work was no longer one of a sporadic and migratory nature. The pipeline of labor between the interior of Mexico and the industrial midwest had been completed.

TABLE 4

Mexicans entering United States giving Illinois as state of intended permanent residence, Fiscal Years 1909-1927

Year	Immigrants
1909	13
1910	27
1911	43
1912	36
1913	18
1914	17
1915	18
1916	22
1917	66
1918	76
1919	159
1920	133
1921	204
1922	116
1923	319
1924	854
1925	703
1926	1,056
1927	1,960
TOTAL	5,840

Note: A total of 5,345 Mexicanos gave Illinois as the state of their intended residence at the time of their admission during the years 1920 to 1927.

Source: Annual Reports of Commissioner General of Immigration, 1920-1927.

TABLE 5

The place of Mexicans among races or people destined to Illinois and place of Mexicans among races or people of all alien immigrants entering the United States, 1909—1927

Year	Rank - Illinois	Rank - United States
1909	33a	17
1910	29	17
1911	30a	16
1912	30a	15
1913	35	23
1914	34	27
1915	32	10
1916	30b	7
1917	19	8
1918	10	1
1919	7	1
1920	14	3
1921	21	6
1922	25	6
1923	18	2
1924	--	--
1925	7	4
1926	6	3
1927	4	1

a) Shared with blacks

b) Shared with Chinese

Source: Annual Reports of Commissioner General of Immigration, 1909-1927.

CHAPTER V

"Vida en la Colonia"

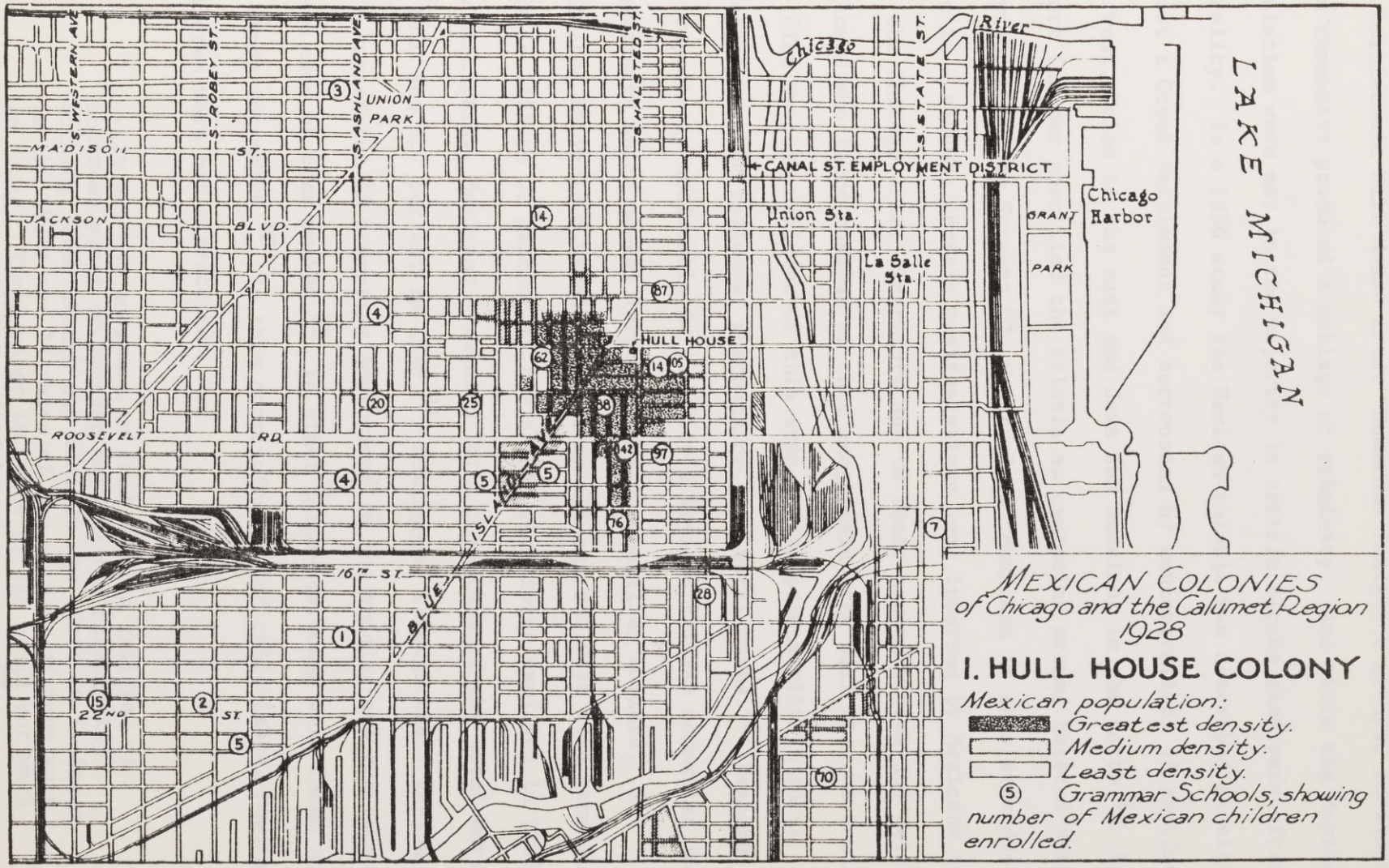
Life in the Mexican Colony

In 1920, the census recorded 4,000 Mexicans in Illinois, yet the pioneer work by Manuel Gamio revealed that by 1926, in only two months almost 3,000 money orders were sent from Illinois to Mexico.[75] During the late 1920s, 58,000 or approximately 4 percent of the total Mexican population in the country resided in the Midwest.[76] Of this number more than half lived in the Chicago area.[77] An overall demographic profile of Mexicans in the northcentral states is provided by George Edson who quotes a 1926 figure of 80,000.[78] As earlier stated (see chapter III, p. and chart #1) there are some very serious problems with Mexican immigration figures. Nonetheless, these figures do reflect the relatively large numbers of Mexicans who were residing in the Midwest during the 1920s.

By the early 1920s Chicago contained three major Mexican settlements; South Chicago, Back of the Yards, and the Hull House area. Each of these settlements or "colonias" were distinct in size, makeup, and the predominating source of employment.[79] For instance, life in South Chicago ran parallel to, and identified with its major industry, steel. As a result, lifestyle evolved about the numerous institutions which were created by the steel mills.[80] In the Back of the Yards, it has been suggested that the meatpacking industry "served as a unifying force enabling residents to work and live in the same community."[81] Unfortunately this is only a speculation; in-depth studies dealing with Chicago's stockyards and its namesake community remain to be done.

Therefore, my focus will center, upon the oldest and most socially organized "colonia";[82] specifically that concentration interspersed within

Hull House Colony, 1928



Source: Taylor, Mexican Labor in the United States: Chicago and the Calumet Region.

MAP 3

the multiethnic Hull House area. Numerous immigrant groups, resident to this community produced a collage of ethnicity. And while the Mexican population were not in the majority in certain blocks they were often the plurality. In a 1930 study the Mexican colonia was described as situated amidst a Greek settlement and surrounded by concentrations of Italians on the west, Poles to the east and Jews and Russians to the north.[83] This report further specified the colonia as centering around Halsted between Harrison and 15th Streets.[84] Nonetheless, Mexicans in this area did not live in a vacuum; certain manifestations were incurred by Mexicans throughout the Chicago area. Therefore due to their commonalities and relevancy, Mexicans who lived outside of this geographic area will also be included.

The Mexican resident of this area worked principally in three industries: the railways, meatpacking, and metal works.[85] Mexican labor was especially noticeable in the city's various railway companies in departments which demand large numbers of unskilled workers. As indicated by Table 6, Mexican labor in Chicago railways rose from 21 percent in 1923 to 42 percent of the total labor force employed in 1928. In the stockyards, Mexicans accounted for 1.5 percent of the total work force in 1920 and 5.7 percent in 1928.[86] Mexicanas, through their sewing skills, were successful in procuring employment in the bedding and rug factories, where many of them worked.[87] In other instances women were found working in candy factories.[88] In this continuing era of child labor, Mexican children were not overlooked:

> ...it was not uncommon to find Mexican children of fourteen years or younger working for practically nothing, even though the minimum age limit in Illinois in the 1920s was 14 years of age with no minimum wage in force. Those under 16 years of age could not work eight hours per day and 48 hours per week.[89]

TABLE 6

Total Numbers and Percentages of Mexicans Employed in Chicago and Vicinity in the Maintenance of Way Departments of Sixteen Railroads, 1916—1928

Year	Mexicans	Total employees	Per cent Mexican
1916	206	....	....
1917	411	....	....
1918	321	....	....
1919	350	....	....
1920	868	....	....
1921	243	....	....
1922	931	....	....
1923	2,181	9,978	21.9
1924	2,978	9,516	31.3
1925	3,710	12,404	29.9
1926	5,255	12,987	40.5
1927	4,284	10,244	41.8
1928	3,963	9,238	42.9

Source: Taylor, Mexican Labor in the United States, Chicago and the Calumet Region, p.32.

In respect to truancy, there is some evidence that school boards did not care whether Mexican children attended school or not.[90] They were perceived as "gypsies with no claim to our free education and with no prospect of benefiting themselves or society by it."[91] The few immigrants whose labor was not solicited were the elder Mexicans; trying to procure employment was virtually futile.[92] Like machinery rendered useless, they were simply tossed aside.

The majority of Mexican workers were undoubtedly employed in unskilled jobs yet within the "colonia" could be found artists, teachers and former middle-class businessmen.[93] The wide diversity of pre-immigration occupations reveals the heterogeneity of the Mexicans who immigrated. These included postmasters, customs collectors, college and school teachers, diplomatic officers, army officers, writers and clerks.[94] From these ranks some chose the pursuit of business enterprise while the majority were forced to enter the world of the working class. George Edson capsulizes the reason for these reversals of occupations.

> A still greater number of men with clerical or professional education are working in tanneries, steel mills and packing houses, mostly as common laborers, because they cannot speak English, cannot adapt themselves to America business methods and cannot compete in a field already overcrowded by Europeans.[95]

In spite of Chicago's sizable number of well-educated and professional Mexicans, only 400 of his countrymen, the Mexican Consul estimated, were employed in Chicago as clerks or office assistants.[96] Taylor's research revealed even a lesser amount, his figures totaling "not over 200."[97] The wife of a formally educated Mexican explained the

nuances of a Mexican education in an Anglo-dominated society:

> This is no place for Mexican people of good education; here all Mexicans look and are treated alike. Now I have a good education but I am treated just the same as these poor peons who can neither read nor write. My husband also has a good education. He talks English and has been educated in Spanish, what good does it do him? He has helped the boss by acting as interpreter ever since he has been working for the Company, but still he gets only 44 cents an hour. They pay him at the rate of a laborer, but they expect to use his education to their advantage.[98]

The juxtaposition of various Mexican classes into laboring groups was apparently not atypical. It created a somewhat tragic/comical situation or in somewhat poetic words of an observer.

> Many men who were born to soft estate first learned in the foundries of Pittsburgh what it means to bend the back in toil. The nobility of labor was introduced to the aristocracy of Mexico. The former landlord's son wore callouses on his palms working side by side with the former tenant.[99]

In other cases, Mexicans were ill-trained for employment in industrial America. Craftsmen such as shoemakers could not pursue their vocation in a highly mechanized society.[100] A few stanzas from a ballad entitled "El Enganchado" or "The Hooked One" reveals the plight of a handicraftsman who contracts himself for labor and leaves Mexico with high expectations, only to have them shattered by the harsh realities of life in the United States.

> I came under contract from Morelia
> To earn dollars was my dream,
> I bought shoes and I bought a hat
> And even put on trousers.
>
> For they told me that here the dollars
> Were scattered about in heaps;
> That there were girls and theaters
> And that here everything was good fun.

> And now I'm overwhelmed—
> I am a shoemaker by trade
> But here they say I'm a camel
> And good only for pick and shovel.
>
> What good is it to know my trade
> If there are manufacturers by the score,
> And while I make two little shoes
> They turn out more than a million.[101]

Undoubtedly, Chicago's initial waves of Mexican immigrants were mainly single men or "solos." However, upon establishing some semblance of order it became commonplace to send for their families. Within comparatively short periods of time, families were reunited. The short and simple account of a "solo" who arrived in 1916 exemplifies this practice. "In 1917 I sent money to my mother and sister for tickets to come to Chicago."[102] Soon afterwards this Mexicano established a boarding house whereupon his lodgers followed the oft repeated practice. "Some of my young boarders went south after they made some money, got their families and returned to Chicago."[103] Along the same theme another immigrant reported:

> We came from Colorado here because my uncle lived and worked here. Where he goes the whole family follows, just like in lots of other Mexican families. We have our uncles and aunts and cousins and the whole family up here. It's lots of fun when we are all together; there are over twenty-five of us.[104]

In addition a Chicago social worker reported the arrival of a truly extended family; "three brothers, wives, and children; mother, sister, her child, aunt, uncle, and his children, and another family not related."[105]

During the 1920's the almost ceaseless flow of Mexican immigrants to Chicago did not allow contemporary researchers to account for the daily

arrival of family members who were coming to join husbands, sons or fathers. This recurring phenomenon simply could not be recorded unless one kept daily tabulations. To fully grasp the probability of large numbers of Mexicans who immigrated to join family members one must understand the basic tenets of the Mexican family. The fundamental institution of Mexican life is "la familia," composed of blood relations, in-laws, godparents or "padrinos" and a wide array of "distant" relatives. Functioning as a cohesive integral unit, this network of close family and extended kin produces an ambience of closeness, unity and solidarity. When the "solos" first arrived, they carried with them cultural baggage, which included the bonds of the traditionally strong and unified "familia." This propensity to join family is characterized by an early immigrant, whose strong family ties and need to join her two sons prompted her moving to Chicago.[106] Even the hardships of migratory life in the United States were both endured and alleviated by the mere fact that so long as that family was together, it was happy.[107] The tenacity of the Mexican family can perhaps explain the process by which these immigrants were able to maintain a sense of pride and dignity in spite of their designations to the most arduous, dirty, and menial employment. Or as Garcia has noted, "considering the family disruptions that normally accompany a migration process, the Spanish speaking family shows remarkable strength."[108]

Moreover, presently available "hard" data points to the obvious increase of Mexican family units in the Midwest. During the fiscal year 1926-1927, one-third of the Mexican immigrants entering the United States said that they were going to join relatives.[109] As the Mexican "colonias" entered the mid 20's, Taylor reported, "the proportion and size of

families doubtless increased with the advancing age group and the coming to the area of a large number of wives and families."[110] Taylor added, "increasingly between 1923 and at least 1928, they were bringing Mexican women folk to the area and maintaining homes."[111] In respect to the "Chicago District," statistics provided by Edson reveal that children, from the ages up to 18, accounted for 23% of the total Mexican population.[112] Particularly significant is the fact that of the numerous "colonias" in Chicago, the Hull House area contained the greatest concentration of Mexican families.[113] In addition, during the winter months sugar beet workers who were largely composed of family units[114] would move into the Hull House area,[115] thereby increasing the Mexican familial structure of the "colonia."

Ill-prepared, unequipped and competing with the more educated second-generation of white ethnics, the Mexican soon found that he was welcomed only in unskilled labor; where work was the hardest, dirtiest and most uncomfortable.[116] Relegated to the worst and most dangerous jobs, the Mexican was nonetheless consistent in his attendance.

> ...although they complain of the gases used in the foundries, the changes from heat to cold, the dampness in the tanneries and packing houses and the dust in the cement and asbestos plants the time sheets show that absence from work on account of sickness is little.[117]

Even on the beet fields there were indications that Mexicans were eager to earn "extra money" by performing non-beet related tasks.[118] Such tenacity and favorable working traits undoubtedly affected their employment potential. Oftentimes meritorious conduct and continuous service was

rewarded by promotions to semi-skilled or skilled jobs.[119] At times, Mexican labor was especially favored, as in the case of a large Chicago hotel[120] or a local bedding company.[121]

In the stockyards, Mexicans were often assigned to the most unappealing sections; hide cellars, freezers, pickling, glue and refrigeration.[122] Mexican workers did not complacently welcome these jobs; it was more a matter of resignation.[123] Oftentimes those jobs assigned to Mexicans were not only unstable but entailed the greatest amount of industrial hazards and dangers.

> The jobs many of the Mexicans have are necessarily subject to lay-offs, and in some industries are liable to incapacitate a man through illness, as in the tanning industry, where the men working with hides are sloppy wet half the time. Men are frequently injured in the rough jobs, which usually involve more risk than skilled work, especially when other men let things fall on them, start machines and catch them or run trams over them.[124]

Of the three major employers of Mexicans, the best paying were ranked as follows; steel, meatpacking and railroads.[125] Preference of employment was therefore largely commensurate to the respective wages.[126] A steel worker explained this hierarchy of employment.

> It is not a question which industry they prefer, but mainly two other things. It is, "where can I find work soonest?" and "where do they pay the best?" Now when they come here they like to work for the steel products company because it pays best; but if there is no work soon, they will work at the steel mills or the car repair plant. They keep away from the car repair plant (where the wages are lowest) as long as they can. But even that is better than the track. The track is one of those places of last resort. As for the beet fields, they are only for those in despair and the greenhorns that come up from Mexico.[127]

A Mexican railroad worker considered other relevant factors and concluded.

> If things are best for me in the steel mills I go there, if they are best in the section I go there. The work, the conditions, and the wages are things we look for.[128]

In spite of these relatively well-paying jobs, Mexicans as a group possessed the lowest earning power. In 1925, a study of Mexican family earnings reported that 30 percent earned less than $80 per month, 56 percent less than $100, and 80 percent less than $125.[129] Despite these statistics, it is significant to note that by 1928 one-sixth of 5,000 Mexicans employed in seven large Chicago plants were semiskilled, and 1.5 percent were skilled.[130] Mexican women, contrary to their previous lifestyles, became part of the industrial labor force. Due primarily to economic necessity, 47 percent of Mexican women worked to supplement family income.[131] In general, most Mexican men seemed to sense an imminent danger in allowing their wives or daughters to secure equal roles.[132] Though her wages were obviously needed, psychological dilemmas often plagued the traditionally male head of the household.

> We were quite desperate as my funds were getting low. My wife resolved to go to work even though in Mexico she had never, never worked. I felt at first very much ashamed of myself because I was not able to support her. I often wonder what my father would say if he knew she was working. I never would have approved of it but what can you do? Economic circumstances in this country are different from Mexico. You have to make the best of the situation and meet the Moor in his country.[133]

In this age of feminist movements, Mexicanas were often rallied under the same banner of women rights, especially illustrative is an article entitled

"Los Derechos de la Mujer." Published in El Heraldo de las Americas, it appeared on Nov. 15, 1924.

> La mujer, como parte integrante de la communidad que se llama familia humana, tiene derecho a tomar parte activa y pasiva en los trabajos, atribuciones, puestos publicos y privados a que es llamado el hombre, siempre que este capacitada para ello,[134]

Confined to the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder, Mexican laborers were the most vulnerable to the fluctuations of industry. As a result, large proportions of Mexicans had to frequently deal with the realities of unemployment and underemployment.[135] These conditions help account for the highly mobile nature of Mexican labor within the Chicago-Gary region and to a limited extent, the Detroit area.[136] Like other laboring groups, Mexicans in Chicago engaged the services of employment agencies. Highly exploitative in nature, labor agencies had long gained nationwide notoriety. In 1912, the U.S. Bureau of Labor compiled a list of the various types of abuses committed by private employment agencies.

1. Charging a fee and failing to find work for the applicant.
2. Sending applicant where no work exists.
3. Sending applicant to distant point where unsatisfactory work exists but whence the applicant will not return on account of the expense involved.
4. Collusion between the agent and employers, whereby the applicant is given a few days work and then discharged to make way for a new workman, the agent and the employer dividing the fee.
5. Charging exorbitant fees or giving jobs to such applicants as contribute extra fees, presents, etc.
6. Inducing workers, particularly girls who have been placed, to leave, pay another fee and get a "better job."[137]

Immigrants to Chicago had suffered this exploitation for decades. Over the years there was little reform, despite exposure. For example in 1908 the Italian American press lambasted these unscrupulous merchants of labor.[138] Now it was the Mexican's turn. In the "colonia" abuses by employment agencies were apparently so commonplace that an exposé was conducted by the local Spanish language newspaper, Mexico.

> For the third time we raise our voice to warn the resident Mexican colony of this city to close to the public the notorious employment offices of Canal Street, which are nothing but dens of marihuana smokers, guarded by dangerous thieves; centers of vagrancy and gambling both.[139]

In one instance, state authorities were able to intervene by canceling the license of a Greek labor agent who had been cheating Mexicans and other laborers.[140] These abuses were neither precedential nor unique to Mexicanos; their predecessors, the Italians had often fallen victims to these unscrupulous merchants of labor.[140] Apparently Mexicans had no other alternative but to utilize these job placement services. "Free employment offices" were maintained by the state. Unfortunately Spanish speaking staff was lacking, thereby preventing any extensive usage by Mexicans.[141] On the other hand, private employment agencies made it a policy to employ Spanish-speaking personnel; one agency in particular maintained an entirely Mexican staff.[142]

Advertisement in the local Mexican newspapers was another source of attracting potential Mexican laborers.[143] Representative of this direct appeal to Mexicans was the following employment agency ad.

LA NUEVA CALABRIA

Agencia General de Empleos

En esta oficina

por su legalidad y confianza enconrareis un
buen apartado para secciones, campos y yardas
por la via del Northernwester

Ademas agenciamos toda clase de empleos en general.

Daniel Bernal. Gerente.

Phone State 0312 565 W. Madison St.
Chicago 144

Labor agents, in spite of their blatant abuses were nonetheless a necessary evil; they placed, for a price, great numbers of people in jobs. In 1927 Chicago's employment agencies (see Table #7) secured 75,400 positions for Mexican clientele. While employment agencies did serve the positive purpose of alleviating unemployment, they also incurred some implicitly harmful effects.

> Investigations show...that instead of relieving unemployment and reducing irregularity, these employment agencies actually serve to congest the labor market and to increase idleness and irregularity of employment. They are interested primarily in the fees they can earn, and if they can earn more by bringing workers to an already overcrowded city, they do so.[145]

The hard earned wages of Mexican workers were apparently budgeted with the precept to save a portion to send home to Mexico. During the summer of 1926, of the total Mexican population in the United States, those in Illinois sent the third largest number of remittances to Mexico.[146] This interesting phenomenon may be partially attributed to the large number of Mexican steelworkers who were believed to be the heaviest senders of money.[147] These money orders usually ranged between $10 and

TABLE 7

Total Number Placed and Number Mexicans Placed by Private Employment Agencies Handling Mexicans in Chicago 1927, and 4 months, 1928.

Name of Agency	Total No. Placed 1927	Total No. Placed 1928	Mexicans Placed 1927	Mexicans Placed 1928
Totals	75,400	3,370	18,335	870
C.B. & Q.	4,000	300	300	0
Chicago & Alton	1,200	0	1,200	0
Chicago National Employment Agency	8,000	600	6,000	400
C.M.St.P. Ry. Co.	19,000	1,000	2,000	0
Erie Employment Agency	3,000	50	35	6
Fedders Employment Agency	5,000	350	3,000	50
Freeland Employment Agency	2,000	200	500	50
International Labor Agency	2,800	60	1,500	22
Interstate	1,800	100	1,500	100
John Conforti Railway Bureau	0	150	0	150
Keller Labor Agency	15,000	100	0	0
Madison Employment Agency	1,500	50	50	0
Samuelson Labor Agency	5,000	50	0	2
Star Employment Agency	3,000	0	0	0
Standard Employment Bureau	2,000	200	150	30
S.W. & A. Construction Co.	2,100	60	2,100	60

Source: Jones, Conditions Surrounding Mexicans in Chicago. p.66

* Estimates given by manager or person in charge. Those for 1928 for first four months of year.

$30 with the majority in the area of $25.[148] Irrespective of these remittances, Mexicans maintained savings accounts that averaged between $50 and $150, but including "quite a few between $150 and $200."[149] In the Hull House district, the Atlas Exchange National Bank advertised itself as "El Mejor Banco para los Mexicanos" and patronized its 600 Mexican depositors by maintaining a "Departamento Mexicano" which offered the additional services of counseling and assistance in immigration matters.[150] That banks were interested in attracting Mexican clientele is apparent from the numerous ads they placed in Chicago's Spanish language newspapers.[151] In other financially related matters, Mexican workers would participate wholeheartedly in employee savings plans.[152] From this evidence it seems clear that by the late 1920s there was some stability in the economic life of at least portions of the Mexican "colonias."

It is significant to note that the large scale arrival of Mexican immigrants to Chicago was immediately preceded by and coincided with a massive influx of Southern Black immigrants. In Chicago, the housing market limited Black occupancy to the clearly defined perimeters of Chicago's "Black Belt." Due to the various perceptions and stereotypes of Mexicans, their racial categorization was in a state of chaos,[153] as a result no formal segregation policy was practiced upon them. In fact, across the northcentral region it was observed that where Black families were excluded, Mexicans were permitted.[154] A volatile tolerance of Mexicans can perhaps best describe Chicago's housing ambience of the 20's. In her investigations, Abbott noted a marked degree of hostility towards the newly arrived Mexican immigration and was permitted residence in only certain blocks.[155] As people of color, Mexicans and Blacks were subjected

to the same price gouging rentals which were double and sometimes triple the rates charged to others.[156] Among landlords it was simply taken for granted that rents for Blacks and Mexicans should be higher than for other tenants.[157] It became very difficult, therefore, for the Mexican worker to obtain satisfactory living accomodations at any reasonable rental. As a result Mexican families rented some of the most decrepit and ill suited living quarters, namely apartments in basements, upper floors and rear tenements.[158] Living conditions in a rear tenement or "alley house" were especially horrendous:

> An alley house recently reported to us was the home of a Mexican family. It was an uncomfortable home in many ways. Only one window in the house opened, and this window and the door were the only means of ventilation. The rooms were just 8½ feet high. Flies and vermin were breeding in the garbage piles, making it very unsanitary and unhealthful for the children who played in this alley. The house was bordered on the side and the back by a paved alley, 15 feet in width. The people from the surrounding tenements threw their garbage and tin cans in heaps along the alley, which made it very foul smelling and filthy. This garbage was hauled away once every two or three weeks, but just opposite the door to this house the garbage was piled up approximately 3 feet in height before it was cleared away. The Mexican family could not have their door open to get air in the house because the refuse blew in.[159]

In essence, Mexicans were forced to reside in those habitats and areas designated for them. A contemporary noted those localities which industrial America had reserved for the Mexican.

> Their homes are often near smoky factories, along gulches or in valley bottoms or on the edge of cities where there are no sidewalks, street paving or electric lights.[160]

Lodgers in Mexican households were commonplace. According to a 1925 study, 43 percent of Mexican households contained lodgers.[161] As a result severe overcrowding was widespread. This high proportion of lodgers has traditionally been accrued to problems resulting from low wages and unstable employment.[162] Another contributing factor was the exceedingly high cost of housing. Yet considering the contemporary methodology and the researchers unfamiliarity with the Mexican family structure they may have erred in confusing some "lodgers" with extended family members. During the 20s, a survey of Chicago's tenements noted a preponderance of Mexican families living together, or as Abbott termed them, "guest families."[163] Recognizing the structure and nature of the Mexican extended family, it would be reasonably safe to conjecture that these joint family living arrangements were more than likely members of the same extended "familia." In respect to actual non-family Mexican groups it is significant to note that the Hull House area, with its largest Mexican population contained less non-family groups than the smaller 'colonia' near the stockyards.[164] In logic with the family composition of the Hull House "colonia," over one-half of the city's total Mexican student enrollment were attending schools in the Hull House area.[165] In addition, the relatively small number of pool halls in the Hull House "colonia" is another indicator of the preponderance of Mexican families in that area.[166]

It is imperative that one fully consider the numerous implications that I have outlined. Namely, that many of these "Mexican lodgers" were in fact members of extended "familia." This clannishness is further exemplified by the tendency of Mexican immigrants to reside in those specific areas which contained people from their villages, towns or

cities.[167] This virtual transplantation of near whole villages was so complete that village and family feuds were often continued in the midwest.[168]

Housing provided by the various railway companies were another source of Mexican residence. Unserviceable boxcars were the standard accomodation provided. Never intended for human habitation, this makeshift housing was stifling in the summer and cold and drafty in the winter. As early as 1920, a Rock Island railway camp was reported containing one hundred Mexican workers and their families. In a sensationalized report the Blue Island Sun-Standard described the camp as consisting of,

> . . . two cottages, one school building, one bunk house for men, 11 box cars, two wooden shacks and one tar paper structure that can be characterized only as a hut.[169]

Sanitary conditions were equally unsuitable, garbage receptacles were not provided, and one toilet served the entire camp.[170]

In 1928, 950 Mexicans, the majority consisting of women and children, were reported living in twenty railroad camps scattered throughout the Chicago area.[171] Six of these camps were located within the actual city limits.[172] By the end of the decade, "several thousand" Mexicans were believed to be living in these camps.[173]

Unhealthy living and working conditions adversely affected the health of Mexicans. These factors were especially detrimental to children, who consequently suffered from metabolic and nutritional diseases such as rickets.[174] During the 20s tuberculosis among Mexicans was of epidemic proportions.[175] Their succumbing to this disease was attributed to the

following;

> Lack of immunity on account of having lived in a mountainous or agrarian community, work ill adapted to physique, meager income causing crowded living conditions and insufficient food are all thought to be important contributing factors to tuberculosis among Chicago Mexicans.[176]

Death as a result of this disease was unusually high among Mexicans.[177] The toll of tuberculosis and the alarming rate of job-related deaths are evident in the causes of death among parishoners at the ethnically Mexican Catholic Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe. (Table 8). In 1930, a Mexican Health Center was established to fight tuberculosis. Its director reported a similar hypothesis behind the Mexican's affinity for contracting this disease.

> . . . insufficient food, poor housing, crowding or physical impossibility of applying the most elementary rules of hygiene, hard work—everything is ideal for the development of many diseases among which tuberculosis occupies the most important place.[178]

The charge of poor Mexicans hygiene has little or no substance. At Chicago's public bath houses, officials reported that Mexicans not only walked further than others to take baths but utilized these services so extensively that they were accused of monopolizing the baths.[179]

Poor health services served to promulgate the poor health of Mexicans. Medical attention was severely hampered by the lack of Spanish-speaking interpreters.[180] Some public agencies such as the Cook County Nursing Service altogether neglected the residents of railway camps.[181] Cultural differences and the cold informal nature of public health institutions were simply not appealing to the newly arrived Mexican

TABLE 8

Ages and Reasons for Death of Eighty-Six Persons Given the Last Rites at Our Lady of Guadalupe in East Chicago (1923-1929).
Total Given Last Rites during this Period - 317.

Age	Pneumonia	Work Accident	Non-Work Accident	T.B.	Violence	Other Illnesses	Reason Not Given	Total
1-under	8						2	10
2-5	1					3		4
6-10		1						1
10-15						1		1
16-20		1	1	1		2	3	8
21				1		1		2
22	2	1	1					4
23		1	1	2				4
24		1	1					2
25	1						3	4
26		2	1		1	2	1	7
27	1		2			1*		4
28		1	1			1	2	5
29					1		1	2
30			1	1		1*		3
31-35	1	1		1	1	1		5
36-40	1			1	2	1*		5
40-50	2	1		1	2	4	2	12
50-72	1			1		2		4
Age Unknown	1							1

Source: Rosales, Mexican Immigration to the Urban Midwest. p.192

* Died from childbirth.

immigrant. Women, in particular showed great reluctance at delivering their babies at county hospitals.[182] Lack of communication, mistrust, and fear of bad treatment served to further accentuate the gap between the Mexican and public health services.

Religion was another aspect of Mexican immigrant life that became subject to the influences of "American" culture. In terms of rituals and ceremonies, Catholicism in the United States was markedly different from the Mexican strain. The American version, Gamio contended, seemed bland to the Mexican who was,

> accustomed to respond to the highly vivid, colorful pagan Catholicism of the small towns and rural districts in Mexico. American Catholicism seems to him almost colorless and standardized and awakens in him no emotional response.[183]

Correlations of church related festivities were also a problem, Mexican feast days often went unobserved because they did not coincide with U.S. holidays. From what evidence is available, it appears that the Catholic Church played a much less significant role in the life of Chicago's Mexicans than it did for most ethnic groups.[184] Few Catholic churches conducted mass in Spanish, and long distances often hampered attendance. In addition, poor examples set by their non-church going neighbors served to further erode church attendance.[185] In conjunction with these aspects, Mexicans found that their new environment offered them more liberty and less censure of conduct from the community and the priest.[186] This new setting also offered them economic independence and subjected them to the influence of Protestant indoctrination that brought to their attention the shortcomings of the Catholic Church.[187]

With unprecendented zeal, Protestants launched a nationwide campaign of proselytizing among Mexicans.[188] Ironically during this same period, the Catholic Church in Chicago was undertaking a consolidation and Americanization program part of which entailed the eradication of its ethnic churches.[189] Undoubtedly, this action, occurring just when the Mexican most needed his own identifiable church, served to further weaken his already poor relationship with the American Catholic Church.

The Protestant church on the other hand was very missionary-minded. These churches provided the Mexican with viable services in the areas of health, employment, material relief and educational classes.[190] An indicator of their sincere interest in the Mexican's welfare dates to 1920 when they played a crucial role in exposing the horrid conditions of Mexican life in a railway camp.[191] Their zeal for converting Mexicans was evident by 1924 when the "Iglesia Evangelina Metodista" placed ads in a Chicago Mexican newspaper inviting "Mexicanos, Espanoles, y Sud Americanos" to attend both church services and English classes.[192] In the final analysis the Catholic Church's relative disinterest coupled with the missionary efforts of the Protestant Church affected the Mexican Catholic in one of three ways: "He becomes a normal, non-fanatic Catholic, indifferent or an unbeliever; or a Protestant."[193] The result was a debilitation of the Mexican's allegiance to the various Protestant denominations. By 1931, it was estimated that one out of every two-hundred Mexicans in Mexico was Protestant while in Chicago the proportion was one out of every thirty.[194] All told, 23 percent of active church-going Mexicans in Chicago were Protestants.[195]

TABLE 9

Chicago Mexican Churches

May, 1928

	Church	Av. Sun. Att.	Sun. Schl.
Total		2077	463
* St. Francis (Catholic)		800	200
Our Lady of Guadalupe (Catholic)		800	
* St. Marks (Presby. & Cong.)	120	125	125
Baptist (S. Chgo.)	68	85	80
* Baptist	20	25	25
Methodist (S. Chgo.)	75	40	40
* Methodist (Polk & Sholto)	200	110	110
* Congregational		9	15
Lutheran	50	65	50
* Pentecostal	30	18	18

Source: Jones, Conditions Surrounding Mexicans in Chicago. p.93,94.

* Located in Hull House Area.

In spite of this active proselytizing, Mexicans in Chicago remained Catholic. Oftentimes the characteristic criticism of the Protestant converts was that ". . . Protestants succeed only in making anti-Catholics of the Mexicans, not good Protestants."[196] In addition it is interesting to note that Mexican Catholics who converted were also those who most actively partook of naturalization.[197]

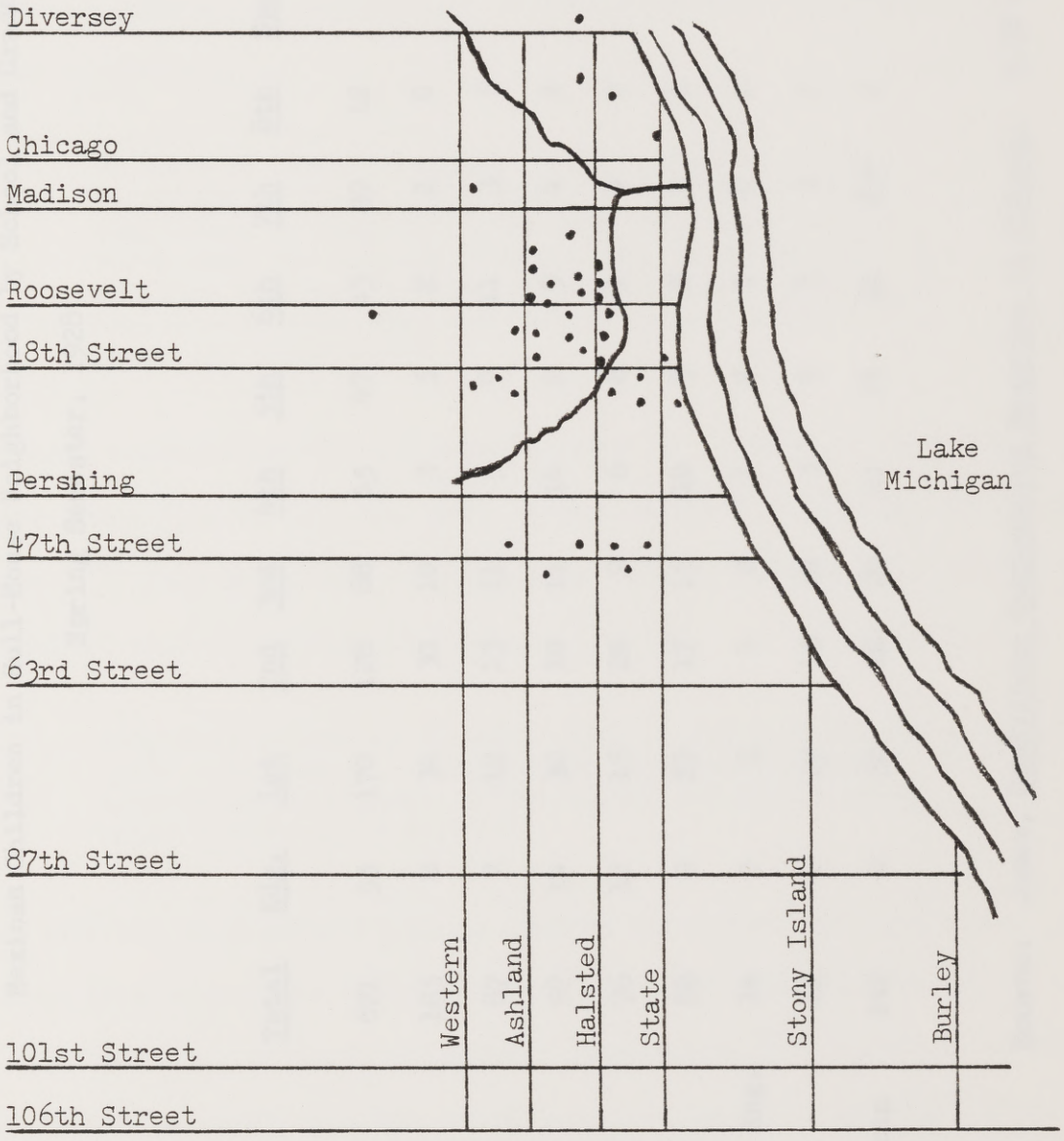
In the Hull House area, Mexican Catholics organized in June, 1925 and had their first mass conducted in a storefront.[198] This congregation was later received as part of the nearby St. Francis Parish, which in 1928 received its first Spanish speaking priest.[199] Significantly in that year, 142 Mexican children were enrolled at the school operated by this parish.[200] Catholic schools seemed to provide a little of both worlds; English was taught in the parochial school yet catechism and culture were taught in the mother tongue.[201]

Education was revered among Mexicans; unfortunately economics curtailed and often dictated the actual years of formal schooling. Continuing to high school was often accomplished at great sacrifice to the family.[202] Yet those who did pursue a high school education were noted for their "studious application" and excellent records.[203] As indicated earlier the majority of educational activity was centered in the Hull-House area. In 1928, 1,160 Mexican children were enrolled in Chicago schools, 671 or 57.8% were attending schools within the Hull House area.[204]

Truancy among Mexicans was scarce,[205] of the few cases reported it was attributed to the lack of proper clothing.[206] Aliens in a foreign country, Mexican parents were fully cognizant of the pragmatic worth in

MAP 4

Distribution of Chicago Elementary Schools
Enrolling Mexicans
(Spring Semester 1928)



Source: Jones, Conditions Surrounding Mexicans in Chicago. p.49.

TABLE 10

Mexican Children in Hull-House Neighborhood by School and Grades

Spring Semester, 1928

School	Total	Kdg.	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	Special	Open Window	Adol. Girl
Total	671	53	170	128	88	65	47	43	39	12	5	18	3
Dante	105	9	34	30	10	3	5	2	2	0	1	9	0
Dore	87	7	12	13	11	5	9	11	3	5	0	8	3
Foster	97	14	30	10	11	14	2	9	4	2	0	1	0
Garfield	76	12	15	20	9	6	8	1	4	0	1	0	0
Goodrich	88	9	23	17	15	10	3	8	2	1	0	0	0
Guardian Ang.	14	0	5	1	2	1	2	1	0	2	0	0	0
Jackson	62	2	19	15	10	5	4	1	1	2	3	0	0
St. Francis	142	0	32	22	20	21	14	10	23*	0	0	0	0

Source: Jones, Conditions Surrounding Mexicans in Chicago. p.39 and 47.

*Eighth combined with seventh grade.

educating their children. According to Edson, "many parents are eager to have their children learn so they can interpret for them and protect the family from grafting and annoyance."[207] Simultaneously Mexican parents viewed the educational system as threats to their ethnicity.[208]

These conflicting interests, a Mexican newspaper expressed could be resolved by providing instructions in both cultures, in effect a bi-lingual curriculum.

> Fathers of families should be very careful in the education of their children, they should see that they learn to read and write Spanish. They should teach them the history of Mexico so that they may know who were Hidalgo, Juarez, Díaz and Madero, just as in the schools here they are taught to love Washington, Grant and Lincoln.[209]

An ensuing consequence was the establishment of schools or learning centers where Mexican children were versed in Spanish language and Mexican culture.[210] This seemingly contradictory pose is further exemplified by the adults' marked interest in learning English. As students they,

> attracted attention by their zeal in learning English, their diligence in studying and their unremitting attendance at classes, often coming a long distance after a hard day's work.[211]

Their interest in English language classes was commendable yet those portions dealing with naturalization were frowned upon and served to reduce attendance, or total withdrawal from school.[212] Parallel to their children's enrollment, Mexican night school students in one Hull House area school accounted for 36% of the citywide Mexican adult enrollment.[213] This high percentage was attained in spite of the fact that public announcement of these classes were not posted in Spanish.[214]

Permanent residency was not contemplated by the majority of Mexican immigrants, instead their duration in the United States was intended to be one of a temporal nature. As a result, naturalization was not seriously considered. Pragmatically weighing its advantages, the Mexican reasoned that naturalization offered no social advantages while attaching a contemptuous stigma upon those who had naturalized.[215] The inferior status of Blacks in the South, they concluded revealed the relative worth of legal citizenship rights.[216]

Intense love for the mother country or "la Patria" was another deterrent to naturalization. Some wives were even sent back to Mexico so that their babies would be born there.[217] This high-spirited patriotism is evident in an immigrant's testimonial.

> I would rather cut my throat before changing my Mexican nationality. . . . My country is before everything else and although it has been many years since I have gone back I am only waiting until conditions get better, . . . I haven't lost hope of spending my last days in my own country.[218]

This patriotism was especially evident during Mexican national holidays. Members of the "colonia" who did not actively participate in celebrating these commemorate holidays were severely berated by the local Mexican press.[219] Active participation in Mexican politics was another example of the immigrants perpetual identification with Mexico.[220] In addition, from the available evidence this patriotism was intensified ". . . as a defensive reaction against legal, social and economic insecurity."[221]

This sojourner mentality combined with a fierce patriotic allegiance to Mexico resulted in an abysmally low rate of naturalization. As indicated by Table 11, in 1928 of the total Mexican population in

TABLE 11

Mexicans Naturalized in Illinois by

Fiscal Years, 1924—1928

Year	Total	Chicago District	St. Louis District
Total	45	24	21
1924	12	2	10
1925	7	3	4
1926	3	2	1
1927	11	5	6
1928 (10 mos.)	12	12	0

Source: Jones, Conditions Surrounding the Mexicans in Chicago, p.78.

Illinois, only 12 chose to become citizens. Without citizenship the Mexican was unable to use politics as a vehicle for upward mobility as previous immigrant groups had done. Without the ballot, Mexicans received no patronage benefits from the city. For example, they were never hired to shovel snow in the winter, a job traditionally allocated to immigrants.[222] Nonetheless it is interesting to note that in 1928 a candidate for political office was openly soliciting the Mexican vote through one of the local Mexican newspapers.[223]

Self-exiled from the political arena, Mexicans pursued the recourse of establishing their own organizations. The principal type of "sociedad" was the "mutualista" or mutual aid society. These "mutualistas," commonplace among other immigrant groups, aided their members in times of sickness, unemployment or death. The nature of other societies ran the full gamut from purely social, to athletic to simply cultural. At times these organizations were elitist, for example, the Comisión Honorifica was composed of seven leading Mexicans and was alleged to be the most prestigious in Chicago.[224] In addition, other societies such as the Comite Pro-Cultura was basically for South Americans.[225] Reflecting immigrant settlements of the 20s, "sociedads" were also found in Chicago's satellite towns of Aurora, Waukegan, Joliet,[226] Gary, East Chicago and Indiana Harbor.[227] Recognizing the relative worth of strength in unity, nine Chicago area societies formed a coalition in 1925, known as the Confederación de Sociedades Mexicanos de los Estados Unidos Americanos.[228] These "sociedads" were not unique to the Midwest, proliferating throughout the nation, they were so bountiful that they exceeded the number of Mexican organizations in Mexico.[229] Unfortunately, these organizations

were often plagued with financial difficulties. Combined with intra-member disputes, these "sociedads" often collapsed.[230] Nonetheless these organizations served to preserve his native identity and promote self-esteem. "Such a well-developed spirit of sociability, fraternalism, and mutual aid . . ." noted Gamio, "undoubtedly contributes much to the well-being and progress of the immigrants."[231]

Chicago area "sociedades" were most active during national celebrations commemorating Mexico's Independence. Functioning independent of each other, these societies sponsored a diversified array of gala events. For example, on September 15, 1924, La Sociedad Mexicana Mutuo Recreativo 'Benito Juarez' hosted a dance which was attended by a crowd of over 1000.[232] On the following day La Sociedad Fraternal Mexicano de Chicago sponsored a fiesta at "Pilsen Park," their program agenda began with music by a Mexican orchestra, followed by violin solos and terminating with a dance.[233] Meanwhile, at nearby Indiana Harbor the "colonia" there organized a parade.[234] Those from the upper stratums of society held an exclusive banquet at the Edgewater Beach Hotel. Those attending were not only the avant-garde of the Mexican communities, but including prominent city officials, merchants, businessmen and the consuls from several Latin American Countries.[235] Similar events were staged during the annual "Cinco de Mayo" festivities. For example, in 1926 the Sociedad Hispano Americano of Aurora sponsored a celebration which was attended by 500 persons.[236]

Chicago was well endowed with Mexican "sociedades." The first established in 1918 was the Sociedad Benito Juarez, ten years later Taylor recorded a total of 35 in this area.[237] Hull House was the home for

several of these "sociedades." In 1921, only the Benito Juarez was reported utilizing its facilities, but by 1928 Hull House was host to the "Spanish American Society, the Mexican Athletic Club, the Mexican Art Theatre, the Azteca and Cuahtemoc Societies."[238] One of the earliest recorded activities at Hull House, was a "Mexican Fiesta" held in 1925.[239] The Hull House Yearbook of 1929 provides a brief sketch of Mexican life in the Hull House.

> They have used Bowen Hall and the theatre to celebrate certain holidays to hold meetings and dances. Dramatic and musical groups of Mexicans also come. As a nationality group, they are comparatively new in Chicago and on that account especially in need of a place where they may gather quietly and comfortably for recreation and study.[240]

Nonetheless, Mexican social activities were not limited to patriotic celebrations. For example, the Hull House based Club Azteca staged an educational fair for Mexican children, its underlying theme to promote Spanish language usage.[241] This value for education is further exemplified by the actions of a "sociedad" in Detroit who raised funds to build a school in Mexico.[242] Other organizations were religiously oriented, such as the Circulo de Obreros Católicos 'San Jose' which was largely responsible for erecting the first Mexican Catholic church in the Chicago area.[243] According to the available evidence, this organization's constitution stipulated that in case the congregation disintegrated, the church building was to become property of the Mexican government.[244] During the 1920s the only known Mexican Catholic organization in the Hull House area was La Liga Protectora Mexicana. Their activities included a fund raising fair or "Gran Kermesse" held at St. Francis Parish.[245]

An integral facet of Mexican social life in Chicago centered about the cultivated arts. The dominantly working-class makeup of Chicago's Mexican communities has prompted the misconception that Mexican laborers are neither refined nor adequately cultured to appreciate the genteel arts. In addition, as indicated earlier, well educated and professional people made up considerable portions of Chicago's Mexican population.

Mexican theater flourished in the Midwest. From Omaha, Nebraska to the Great Lakes region, self-styled dramatic plays were being performed.[246] In Gary and East Chicago, Indiana at least five theatre groups were operating throughout the 1920s.[247] East Chicago was home to the Cuadro Dramatico, a semiprofessional theatrical group which staged nine plays between March, 1927 and May, 1928.[248] The Mexican residents of the Hull House area were equally affectionate of theatrical plays. The first recorded dramatic performance in this area occurred in November, 1924.[249] Mexican theatrical plays were often staged in the Hull House. As indicated by illustration #2 on April 24, 192 a play centering on the life of Pancho Villa was performed by the dramatic troupe, Tempranita Beltri.

Mexican societies headquartered at Hull House often sponsored dramatic productions. Activities of this nature served a dual purpose of inculcating patriotism while providing the "colonia" with sophisticated forms of theatre. For example, in May 1928, to commemorate the "Cinco de Mayo", the Sociedad Ignacio Zaragoza feted a play in the Hull House which mirrored the heroisms of that event.[250] Hull House was also host to a performance by the quasi-comical theatrical group, El Cuadro de Comedia Sainte y Revista.[251] In addition, two dramatic groups were resident to

ILLUSTRATION 1

Advertisement for Mexican Play at Hull House

Source: El Gallito (Chicago) April 23, 1927.

the Hull House, The Mexican Art Theatre[252] and The De Leon Mexican Troupe.[253] Theatrical activities at Hull House continued through the depression.[254]

Bimonthly "fiestas" were also held at Hull House. Sponsored by the Club Recreativo, these events were culturally oriented, their program consisting of "Mexican music, dances and dramatic selections."[255] Similar festivities were sponsored by the Sociedad Hispano Americano who celebrated "Fiesta de la Raza" by conducting a program of music and literary recitals.[256] Mexican societies, via the arts promoted patriotism, pride and self-esteem.

Mexicans also displayed great interest in music. Combining talent and resources, the "colonia" created their own orchestra, La Banda Mexicana de Chicago. In April, 1928, a crowd of 5,000 attended their inaugural concert.[257] Composed of 53 members, their outfits were fashioned after the Mexican military uniform.[258] Mexicans in South Chicago followed in suit, organizing their own band and performing their first concert at Hull House in December, 1928.[259] In addition, music was so developed in the Hull House colonia that it produced a Mexican orchestra which made records.[260]

Instruction in music and dance was available to the Mexican residents of the Hull House "colonia." Two schools were located in the area,[261] one operating out of the Hull House.[262] Interestingly, piano lessons were also being offered in the 26th Street community.[263] In addition, by 1928 the Hull House "colonia" had its own Mexican owned and operated music house.[264] The Mexican's affinity for music was recognized as early as 1925 when the "Rialto Music House" placed ads in Chicago Mexican

newspapers.[265] Four years later, attempting to keep up with the increase of Mexican migration, this music house opened a "Salon Azteca," which claimed to stock over 50,000 Mexican records.[266]

These examples of Mexicans' pursuit and support of the finer arts attest to the existence of sophisticated forms of theatre and music in the "colonias" of the Midwest. Music, and especially theatrical performances had a salubrious effect on Midwestern "colonias."[267]

Another arena in which Mexicans excelled was in the creative arts. Perceived by Jane Addams as those who "sieze upon the plastic arts with the most enthusiasm,"[268] Mexicans practiced pottery making, sculpturing and modeling. The traditional skill of pottery making was fully utilized at Hull House; through their talents a few Mexicans were able to support themselves.[269] This skill also resulted in the appointment of four Mexican potters as teachers.[270] On a larger scope, an entry by a Mexican Hull House potter received an award for the best decorative object at an exhibition of art held by the American Ceramic Society.[271] Mexicans were so important to the Art School of Hull House that their subsequent return to Mexico during the depression "took the heart out of the classes in clay modeling, sculpture and pottery."[272] Perhaps the apex of Mexican art is expressed in the mural that adorned the walls of the cafeteria at Hull House.[273] While my research uncovered a photograph of this mural, its painter and date of production are unknown. Nonetheless the influence of Mexicans is starkly revealed.

Mexicans in the Midwest, though dislocated and separated from their country, strived to establish an ambiance similar to Mexico. Immigrants to

Chicago created their own institutions and through accommodation pursued a life culturally similar to that in Mexico. The cumulative effect of this lifestyle as noted by Gamio, "...is to suggest that the...Mexican may dwell in the United States physically for many years without ever coming to these mentally."[274] The testimonial of an immigrant personifies this sentiment.

> ...it has almost been as if I hadn't lived in the United States, for I have always worked in businesses where almost only Spanish was spoken. At home meals are prepared our style, my friends have always been exiled countrymen, my wife and one of my daughters play the piano and always play Mexican music so that one doesn't feel the change.[275]

These strong cultural ties alleviated the immigrant's despair and helped him maintain a sense of dignity. His dress was a mode of pride. Unlike his overalled compatriots in the Southwest, Mexicans in the Midwest were generally dressed in ready-made or tailor made suits.[276] This practice of changing from work clothes combined with his dignified conduct impressed one observer:

> Their manner of walking and of bearing themselves serves to distinguish them on the streets more than their clothing.[277]

> They walk rather erect, with measured steps, in a straight line and talk in low voices, and when coming from their work in the steel mills they look fresher and neater than the mass of men which pour out of these places into the streets.[278]

In spite of their surroundings and no matter how humble their apartments they seemed to have a certain pride in their homes.[279] Considering the places they had to live in, Mexicans maintained their homes remarkably well, and managed to keep them neat and clean.[280]. Even in

the railroad camps, Mexicans attempted to improve their boxcar homes by building extra rooms, covered porches,[281] coalsheds, garages and wash-houses.[282]

The Mexican media, through their patriotic fervor, were a constant source of pride. Throughout the twenties and thirties, a total of 39 Spanish language newspapers and periodicals were published in Chicago.[283] Across the nation, proportionate to the number of Mexicans, there were more Mexican newspapers in the United States than in Mexico.[284] The Mexican media in Chicago, in addition to inculcating pride, aided the "colonia" in various capacities. Raising funds to provide an array of community services was one function.[285] In another instance, a Mexican newspaper collected funds to transport an elderly unemployed immigrant back to Mexico.[286] A call for attending night school was a common exhortation.[287] Requesting clemency for an imprisoned Chicano in Salt Lake City, Utah, reflects the media's grave concern and direct attempt to intervene on behalf of their constituents.[288] The press also played an active role in protesting the unjust treatment of Mexicans by law enforcement officials.[289] As stated earlier the media also mounted a campaign to prevent exploitation of Mexicans by employment agencies.

The format of Chicago's Mexican newspaper reveals a marked degree of sophistication. Subject material ranged from controversial issues such as women's rights, to the traditional question and answer columns.[290] The lighter side of everyday problems was voiced in a satirical self-criticizing section of Mexico.[291] Sections devoted to poetry were also prevalent.[292] All-told, the media provided valuable services, information and promoted pride in Mexican culture and identity.

Other businesses provided the Mexican with needed goods and services. During 1928, a total of 36 Mexican owned and operated businesses were in the Hull House area. They included "14 restaurants, 5 pool halls, 5 grocery stores, one barber shop, one shoemaker, 4 bakeries, one meat market, two printer shops, one photograph gallery, one tailor shop, and one music shop."[293]

Unfortunately, these enterprises were susceptible to high business mortality.[294] Non-Mexican owned shops also catered to the Mexican's needs, some employing "Mexican" names to attract their trade.[295] That Mexican clientele was elicited in the Hull House area is evident in a barber's alleged expertise in cutting hair, "Mexican style."[296]

The Mexican immigrant's attempt to preserve his native identity in this country was answered by social ostracism. Coinciding with the Mexican immigration, the 20s was an era of nativism which prompted mass Americanization programs. As indicated earlier, Mexical participation in naturalization was negligible. In addition, reluctance to cooperate with community health and welfare officials fomented greater friction and fed mutual animosities.[297] Simultaneously, earlier immigrant groups began to assimilate some of this country's racist beliefs. For example, during the 20s Hull House contained a "Latin Club" that basically consisted of Italians and Mexicans. The Italians' initial reaction was to cordially receive the Mexicans. Three years after its inception this club began to deteriorate, resulting in a split along nationalistic lines. Later, the Italians threatened to boycott the rental of Bowen Hall unless Hull House agreed to stop renting to Mexicans. Their stated reason being that "the hall would lose its prestige if it were being used by people of color!"[298] Italians,

knowingly aware that Mexicans would not be discriminated in Italy because of their color, justified their actions on the grounds, "...we are becoming Americanized."[299]

Mexicans were not singled out as undesirables. The blatantly racist Quota Act of 1924 stands tribute to the heightened anti-immigrant sentiment that was gripping the nation. And, in this era of Jim Crow, Blacks had long been subjected to discrimination. This legacy of prejudice based on color was conveniently abridged to include Mexicans. A social worker in Gary noted the association between anti-Black and anti-Mexican feeling, "...because of the very dark color of most Mexicans, Americans have the same racial feelings as they have for the colored."[300] As people of color, Blacks, Filipinos and Mexicans were denied admission to Chicago's 12th Street Beach.[301] Employers often correlated darkness of skin with inferiority. As in the case of Afro-Americans, lighter Mexicans were given preferential treatment.[302] Discrimination on the job was commonplace. European ethnic foremen usually gave preferential treatment to their own countrymen. A steel worker observed:

> The mayordomos make distinctions. They give the Mexicans the heavy work and the Poles suave work with better pay.[303]

Hostility was also apparent in the actions of public officials. In 1929, the Chicago Chamber of Commerce went so far as to consider formal segregation of Mexicans.[304] American society, influenced by the popular eugenics movement, classified the Mexican into an ambiguous category. A Chicago official, when questioned as to the race of Mexicans responded:

> ...no, they are not regarded as colored, but they are regarded as an inferior class. Are the Mexicans regarded as white? Oh no![305]

This dilemma of racially categorizing the Mexican was later resolved in the 1930 census policy decision of classifying Mexicans into a separate racial category.[306]

Relations between policemen and Mexicans were highly antagonistic. Policemen serving the Mexican communities were often Poles, or members of European nationality groups traditionally competitive with Mexicans for jobs and housing. In 1925, a desk sergeant frankly expressed that he "hated 'em."[307] Ensuing confrontations between police and Mexicans often erupted into violence.[308] At times Mexicans would be mistakenly arrested and imprisoned.[309] In 1924, to combat police repression, Mexicans in Gary formed La Sociedad Protectora Mexicana,[310] others simply took to carrying firearms as a means of protection.[311] Similar racial conflicts in South Chicago prompted Mexicans there to form the Sociedad de Obreros Libres de South Chicago. Their express function, ". . . to protect the Mexican steel workers against the persecution of the Poles and the police of that section of the city. . . ."[312] Mexicans also suffered discriminatory treatment at the hands of the courts. In the municipal courts of Chicago in 1929, 38 percent of all Mexicans charged with misdemeanors were convicted, compared with 23 percent of all others so charged. Similarly, in felony cases 40 percent of the Mexicans but only 19 percent of the non-Mexicans were convicted.[313] Even the Mexican consul was subjected to the wrath of the judicial system. Appearing on behalf of a compatriot, the consul was subjected to a barrage of insults from an arrogant judge who declared,

> The Mexican consul should do some constructive work here . . . and not allow his countrymen to become a charge upon Chicago. We are having a great deal of

> trouble with vagrant Mexicans who require watching. They came here to take work away from the Americans and later become vagrants and create a problem.[314]

The judge then sentenced the consul to jail for contempt. To avoid international embarrassment this case was later stricken from the record. Subjected to these repressive conditions, one immigrant lamented,

> ...we get little more than a miserable existence and are snubbed by our neighbors, abused by the authorities and exploited by everybody."[315]

An incident occurred in the spring of 1927 that exemplifies police and Mexican community relations. In May, Bernardo Roa, a convicted killer, escaped from jail. In his flight he was aided by the Mexican residents of South Chicago and Indiana Harbor. According to Rosales this phenomenon occurred,

> because of the repression that they had suffered at the hands of the police, saw criminals like Roa as social bandits fighting against an unjust system.[316]

The mid and late twenties was an era of frenzied race consciousness, eugenics and the upsurge of the KKK. Chicago Heights, as noted by Garcia, had a very active chapter of the Klan, "...and racial conflict between Whites, Blacks and Mexicans was a common occurrence."[317] The Anglo press with their slanted coverage of Mexicans only perpetuated stereotypes by running sensationalized stores of Mexicans arrested for drunkenness.[318] Nonetheless, racist attacks did not emanate solely from these sources. In 1928, a cross section of American society supported a quota restriction on Mexico. Supporters included the Daughters of the American Revolution, Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars of California,[319] and the KKK Imperial

Realm of California. In this age of scientific racism, restriction lobbyists were terrified of the effect that Mexicans might have on American society.

> The Mexican's Indian blood and mixed blood would pollute the nation's vital genetic purity, and his biological determined degenerate character traits would sap the nation's moral fiber and corrupt its political and social institutions.[320]

The United States offered some form of economic stability but the price was high. Life in this country was a matter of endurance, similar to a "jail in disguise."[321] Financial reward was the basic impetus for tolerating these abuses. Making money, not having a good time was the reason for living in the U. S. Yet, as the latest arrived immigrant, his temporal nature and his skin color all served to hinder his mobility and acceptance into American society. Periodic employment and high cost of living prevented many Mexicans from accumulating the nest egg they had migrated for. An unemployed laborer deplored his experiences in this country.

> I have worked very hard here so far, but have little to show for it. It cost a great deal to live here. The United States has proved a road to Calvary for me so far and I hope it changes so that when I go back I will have something nice to say besides saying that I worked very hard here.[322]

CHAPTER VI

Repatriation and Depression

Economics, the prime reason for migrating to this country was also the basic motive for leaving it. Mexicans, a sought after labor commodity of the 20s were now rendered useless by the depression. Those who had actively recruited Mexican labor now simply deserted them. For example, U.S. Steel in Gary, Indiana, who had actively funneled Mexicans into the expanding steel industry now disavowed any corporate responsibility for their migration to Gary.[323] Abandoned by their employers, depression America awoke to find in her midst, large numbers of unemployed and destitute Mexicans. Faced with nationwide unemployment the country turned to a seemingly logical recourse, repatriation of Mexicans.

The first step in removing Mexicans from this country was to stop the flow from Mexico. The formulation of a new restrictive visa policy, and its meticulous enforcement resulted in a drastic reduction of issued visas. From the American consulate in Nuevo Laredo it was reported:

> We are cutting down the issuance of visas in our office to what you might call the bare bones . . . The cases that do get favorable treatment are all ones that fairly wring the tears out of a stone. We hold them up until they have complied with every regulation and never give up hope of turning them down . . . We turn down applicants that are better than ninety percent of the ones who used to get visas.[324]

Consuls arbitrarily denied visas on the pretense of "may become public charges." As one official put it:

> Two years ago if a man came with a wife and five kids and five dollars, we would let him in, now if he were to come with five hundred dollars, we would turn him back.[325]

In addition, immigration officers were abusive, subjecting Mexicans to ". . . todo clase de humillaciones."[326] In 1931 only 2,457 visas were granted to Mexicans, a 94% reduction from the 1929 figure.[327] To insure proper enforcement of these laws, the border patrol was enlarged and a crackdown on undocumented entries was undertaken. For years Immigration authorities had greatly encouraged and facilitated entry, their new policy produced some startling results.

> . . . we have passed in practically one year from a wide open Mexican border to a practically closed Mexican border. This has been accomplished, not by the enactment of any restrictive legislation . . . (but) by the strict enforcement of existing laws.[328]

With unemployment reaching record high numbers, employers initiated the practice of limiting hiring to citizens. To continue holding their jobs, Chicago area steel workers were required to produce either citizenship papers or "first papers."[329] Ironically, the Mexican's decision to refrain from naturalization would now reap its heavy toll. Throughout the country ordinances were passed restricting work on public improvement to citizens. Containing similar restrictions, Federal aid and the WPA brought no relief.

The predominant expelling force of repatriation was unemployment. Simultaneously, family ties, lower cost of living and patriotic love for the mother country beckoned his return home. An aura of pragmatic reasoning characterized the repatriate.

> If you were broke and without a job, would you rather be home, or in a foreign country. . . . In Mexico there's always tortillas. You can eat whether you have money or not. In the United States if you have no money you starve.[330]

Reversing the flow of migration back to Mexico was expedited by a variety of ploys and schemes. In Los Angeles, local authorities and the media underhandedly consorted to "scare tactics."[331] Throughout the country, relief authorities played an unmitigating role of promoting repatriation. Instead of providing financial aid relief authorities offered the opportunity to return to Mexico. In Detroit, public welfare authorities established an intermediary "Mexican Bureau." "There discussion occurred as to the desires of the Mexican family head with reference to return to his native land."[332] Oftentimes violating their client's rights,[333] situations were created whereby Mexicans could accept repatriation more easily than obtain direct relief. A resident of East Chicago, Indiana recollected:

> If a Mexican applied for aid they refused him but they would tell him "look, we can provide you tires for your truck and give you money for gasoline. Why don't you return to Mexico and take these people with you."[334]

Coercion of this nature was commonplace. Threatening to cut funds and retaining families on "cafeteria lists" were methods caseworkers employed to coax the uncooperative Mexican.[335] Dealings with relief authorities were most unpleasant, their demeaning attitudes made Mexican applicants "feel like something slimy."[336] Incipient danger lay in applying for public assistance. In Chicago, Mexican relief cases were "referred to the immigration authorities for deportation."[337]

Private organizations played significant roles in repatriation. In East Chicago, the American Legion coordinated a successful repatriation program.[338] In nearby Gary, several groups formed a coalition to promote

forced repatriation.[339] As a result of these collective actions the southward flow began. Mexican repatriates left the country via train, truck, and cars. Fully one third returned in their own automobiles.[340] Others left in freight cars and some hitchhiked.[341] Shortage of funds and sheer desperation often resulted in dangerous traveling accomodations.

> Many are returning in trucks, such a large number going on one truck that they have to stand, and only a few days ago one of the Mexicans who left Gary in this way was thrown from the truck and killed before the border was reached.[342]

Further catalyzing this movement of people was President's Cardenas distribution of land. The seemingly bright outlook of Mexico's colonizing projects also served to lure the Mexican home. An additional incentive was the Mexican government's decision to allow repatriates to bring back material possessions duty free. A "repatriada" recalled the congestion on the border, lauded the duty free provision of the law.

> Ese, puerto de Laredo habia lineas de trucas y de carros que no alcansaban a pasar ne en tres dias. Porque te tenian que revisar todo lo que llevabas. Tu te ivas con todos tus muebles. Tenias dos, tres carros, carros, te los llevabas. Tenias tres trucas te las illevabas. Todo te dejo pasar el presidente para Mexico. Si usted tenias implementos de agricultura, tambien te los haber llevado. Lo que el querida ere que se fuera la gente.[343]

Amidst this repatriation madness, little or no concern was shown to the U.S. born children of Mexicans. For example, a Chicago resident recalled her family's repatriation to Mexico. Of her six children, five were native born citizens of the United States.[344] By defining people

along cultural instead of national lines, American society deprived Chicanos of their rights guaranteed them by the Constitution.

Mexican repatriates endured numerous traveling hardships. Relief monies allotted for food expenses was often "not enough to carry them to their destination."[345] Furthermore, relief funds were computed to accomodate the repatriate merely to the border, not his interior located destination. As a result Mexicans were often stranded at Mexican border towns. While the Mexican government did provide some free transportation, it was simply not adequate to fulfill the deluge of repatriates.[346] A retired East Chicago steel worker recalled her dilemma.

> At Nuevo Laredo we had to wait for two weeks for transportation to go the rest of the way—they wouldn't feed us (the Mexican Government) because we had no children and so we had to look for food in garbage heaps.[347]

The experiences of Mrs. Maria de Jesus Pulido-Medel were similar. Self-repatriated from St. Louis, Missouri her family was able to travel on their own resources to San Luis, Potosi (Mexico). Devoid of funds and stranded 400 miles from their final destination, La Piedad, Michoacan, Mr. Pulido was forced to sell his American made jacket thereby procuring funds needed to complete their journey.[348]

According to Mexican data, 311,717 Mexicans returned to Mexico between 1930-1933.[349] During this period a total of 28,523 Mexicans departed from Illinois, Michigan, and Indiana.[350]

Repatriation pressures were especially harsh in the Midwest. This stemmed from the reason that these states were more industrialized and thus harder hit by the depression. As a result one half of the Mexican

population of Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan were repatriated. Though comprising 3.6 percent of Mexicans in the U. S. these states furnished a disproprotionate 10.3 percent of all repatriates.[351] Reflecting their regional origins, 60%-70% of Chicago area repatriates returned to the central plateau states in Mexico, Michoacan, Guanajuato and Jalisco.[352]

Repatriates were not a homogeneous group and therefore it is difficult to fix any definite patterns. Because the population was besieged with economic difficulties, it was likely that many were never able to reach their final destination. In a study involving 129 repatriates it was found that slightly less than one half had not returned to their home towns.[353] From this evidence one can see the splintering effects on Mexican village life. Of greater importance, repatriation separated families, in some instances the children remaining with relatives or friends in the United States while the parents returned to Mexico.[354]

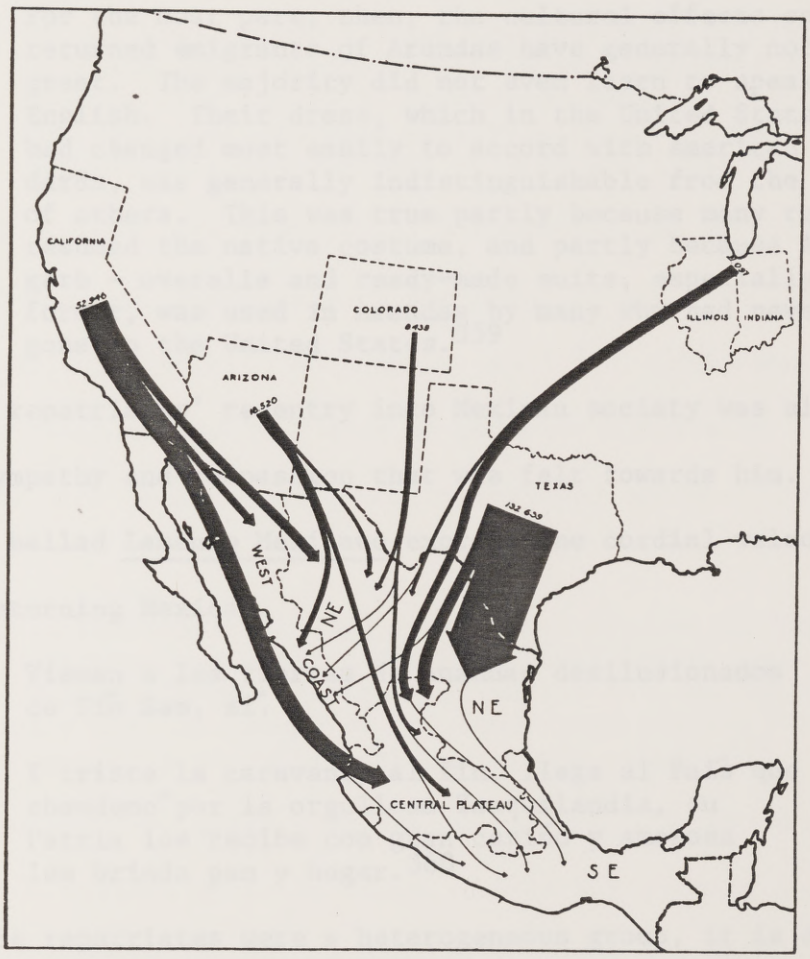
Occupational adjustment was a problem for the returned emigrant. In a field study involving 114 repatriates, it was found that over one-half were no longer pursuing their previous occupations.[355] Industrial skills had little appreciable value in Mexico. As one ex-steel worker lamented:

> I would like to know the metallurgical industry better, but there are no plants here.[356]

Even where steel work was available, newly formed Mexican unions controlled hiring via waiting list.[357] Fluency in English may even have been detrimental in securing a job, one employer stating that the repatriate "spoiled" the other workers.

MAP 5

Regional Destinations of Mexican Repatriates from Texas, California, Illinois-Indiana, Arizona and Colorado, respectively, 1930-1932.



Source: Paul S. Taylor, Mexican Labor in the United States: Chicago and the Calumet Region, 1932, New York: Arno, 1970, p.44

> I wouldn't give any Mexican a job who talked back to me in English when I address him in Spanish. I consider that a sign of disrespect. They are not like they used to be.[358]

While most "repatriados" suffered economic and occupational maladjustments, culturally their was no adjustment necessary. Living in the U. S. proved to have little effect on the immigrant's lifestyle.

> For the most part, then, the cultural effects on the returned emigrants of Arandas have generally not been great. The majority did not even learn to speak English. Their dress, which in the United States they had changed most easily to accord with American standards, was generally indistinguishable from the dress of others. This was true partly because many readily resumed the native costume, and partly because American garb - overalls and ready-made suits, especially the former, was used in Arandas by many who had never gone to the United States.[359]

The repatriates' re-entry into Mexican society was also facilitated by the sympathy and compassion that was felt towards him. A few verses from the ballad Lamento Mexicano express the cordial welcome extended to the returning Mexican.

> Vienen a las tierras de Anahuac desilusionados
> de Tío Sam, sí.
>
> Y triste la caravana, al fin, llega al País que
> abandonó por la orgullosa Yanquilandia, su
> Patria los recibe con gran cariño y amorosa
> les brinda pan y hogar.[360]

Since repatriates were a heterogeneous group, it is difficult to ascertain any dominating attitudes towards their return to Mexico. Two short, but simple, testimonials exemplify this wide gradation of dispositions:

> I don't like it here, you can't make a living.
> I want to go back there.[361]

> I like it better here than the heat and cold of Chicago. This is my Patria.[362]

Those Mexicans who stayed in the midwest suffered the same economic maladies that were ravaging the entire country. Mexican businesses were especially hard hit, at least one-half of them folding. In the steel mills pressures from local groups prompted the discharge of Chicano workers. According to Rosales and Simon:

> At one steel plant a dozen Chicanos were informed by their superintendent that in spite of good work records they had to be discharged because they were not citizens; at times no distinction was made between Chicanos who were or were not citizens...[363]

As stated earlier, aid from relief authorities was difficult to obtain. In some instances, Mexicans were too proud to ask for charity, one family subsisting totally on pumpkin candy.[364] Settlement houses could do little to alleviate the pains of economic depression. For example, Hull House kept their neighborhood unemployed pre-occupied by showing movies.

> In the summer of 1933 a series of outdoor moving pictures was held in the Hull-House Court, on Halsted Street, designed primarily for the Mexican and Italian groups of the unemployed who met regularly at Hull-House during the winter.[365]

To counter the effects of the depression, Chicago's Mexicans turned to a variety of labor clubs, unions and workers' organizations. One worker's group, El Frente Popular Mexicano was modeled after Mexico's radical union, the Confederacion de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM).[366] Other labor organizations such as the Illinois Workers Alliance actively sought the participation of Mexicans.[367] In other instances Mexicans were invited to discuss relief problems.[368]

Mexican union activity was especially evident in the steel mills. Their participation was especially noticable during the "Little Steel" strike of 1937. According to an early president of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (S.W.O.C.):

> Mexican workers were crucial to the success of the picket lines at East Chicago's steel plants, making up at times three-fourths of the demonstrators.[369]

Mexicans were also present during the infamous "Memorial Day Massacre." On that day, their sizeable presence prompted one Chicago policeman to characterize the crowd as resembling the "Mexican Army."[370] A more realistic estimate would credit Mexicans as composing fifteen percent of the demonstrating body. Significantly, of the 68 wounded in the "Massacre":

> At least eleven of those injured during the melee were Chicanos, six of them from East Chicago and five from Chicago.[371]

In spite of the numerous problems beseiging the Mexican, an increase in social stability was noted.[372]

In 1934, one Stock Yards area bank reported over 2,000 Mexican savings accounts.[373] Another form of stability was evident in the era's heralding of the first known midwest broadcast of Spanish-language radio. Incepted in 1938, this 15-minute Mexican broadcast was known as the "Azteca Hora." Transmitted from radio station WHIP in Hammond, Indiana, its program consisted of live music and news announcements.[374] Meanwhile, in the political spectrum that same year witnessed the organization of the "first Mexican American Political Club."[375] All told the Mexican communities had endured the depression. While their number had been reduced, they were still very noticable. In 1939 Hull House

reported that of the 17 national groups in their area, Mexicans were the third largest.[376] On the eve of the second world war, Mexicans comprised twenty percent of those people registered for activities at Hull House.[377]

CHAPTER VII

The Resurging Tide of Immigration: 1941-1960

Like the earlier war, the second world war prompted the active solicitation of Mexican labor. However, unlike earlier recruitment policies, this importation of Mexican workers was accomplished through the co-operative efforts of both the U. S. and Mexican governments. It was under these auspices that arose the "Bracero" Agreements of 1942 and 1943. Thus, with the full and "legal" consent of the U. S. government, Chicago became re-established as a major destination for Mexican immigrants. Railroads in particular absorbed huge reservoirs of Mexican labor. Between May 1, 1943 and September 30, 1945, more than 15,000 Mexican railroad workers were brought to Chicago.[378] Correlating with this dramatic increase of Mexicans to Chicago was the 1946 construction of the ethnically Mexican Catholic Church of Immaculate Heart of Mary.

During the war, Chicago's Chicanos like other ethnic Americans responded to the call of the military. A Chicano community worker observed:

> There is hardly a family...that does not have a father, brother, or sweetheart in the active service.[379]

Caught up in the fervorous war effort, the Chicago Tribune reported:

> The Chicago area has more than 30,000 Americans of Mexican descent, all of whom have been brought closer to their adopted country by the impact of war.[380]

These patriotic overtures became manifest in the creation of the Mexican Civic Center. Funded through the Chicago Area Project, the center's main

thrust was to facilitate and expedite the Mexican's entry into mainstream American society. It's director reported:

> We're trying to help children and adults make successful adjustments to the American way of life.[381]

After the war, this assimilationist doctrine was preached by the Mexican-American Council (MAC). Regarding itself as the "first professional social agency exclusively for the Spanish speaking people of Chicago," their primary aim "was and is to assist in the integration of the Mexican into American society."[382] Or, put in the more realistic terms of the Sun-Times:

> The Mexican-American Council...works to make full-fledged Chicagoans out of Mexican immigrants.[383]

In spite of the Mexican's numerous contributions to the war effort, Chicago area Mexicans were still subject to the restraining forces of dominant society. In 1948, Frank Paz, Chairman of the Committee on Mexican-American Interests, issued a scathing condemnation of the various discriminatory measures practiced upon the Mexican. These practices were especially evident in the various steel unions. Despite the Mexican's large scale employment since the twenties and their active union participation of the thirties, it was sadly revealed:

> No Mexican-American is on the staff of the Union in the entire Calumet Region with the exception of a single office girl in Indiana Harbor. It must be remembered that there are about 6000 Mexican-American workers employed in the steel industry in Chicago alone.[384]

Ironically, this apparent refusal to place Mexicans in union positions followed their unmitigating confirmation of union solidarity. In his report, Paz provided the following excerpt from the Chicago Star,

May 10, 1947:

> At Inland Steel last week, the company imported some 250 Mexican workers two days prior to the calling of the strike. They were brought up from Texas for the sole purpose of scabbing, but company plans back-fired. Not only did the Mexicans refuse to scab but they marched in the Inland Steel office in a body to demand the company pay their transportation back home and to add to the company's chagrin, signed up in the union as an indication of their solidarity.[385]

Paradoxical to these restricting practices, Mexicans in general were able to thrive. (In comparison to the earlier Italian and Polish immigrant groups, by 1950 Mexicans had fared comparatively well. As indicated on Table 12, Mexicans not only attained greater education levels, but managed to exceed the income power of the Polish.)

However, the increasing stability of the Mexican community was not allowed to run its natural course. Undocumented entries which were tolerated during the war now came under incessant fire. As early as June, 1948, the Chicago Tribune began featuring sensationalized reports of "smuggled Mexicans" who were reaching the Chicago area.[386] In October, 1953, the Chicago Sun-Times ran an especially slanderous story on the Mexicans in Chicago. This story not only cited an over-inflated figure of 100,000 Mexicans living in Chicago, but asserted that "about 15,000, possibly more, are 'wetbacks'."[387] According to the director of the Chicago office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, "an average of almost 300 'wetbacks' were deported monthly from Chicago."[388] After citing these grossly misleading figures, the article then proceeded to imply that the Hull House "colonia" was filled with filth, illiteracy, drug-addicts, "wetbacks," and criminals.

Characteristic to the Mexican, this defaming article could not be

TABLE 12

Foreign-Born Income, Education, and Age in Chicago: 1950

	Income	Education	Age
Mexican	$2,500	5.6	43.1
Italian	2,630	4.8	
Polish	2,374	5.5	58.3

Education and Income: Mexican Americans, Mexican-Born, Italian American, and Polish American: Chicago, 1950

	Education	Income
Mexican American	9.0	$2,066
Mexican-born	5.6	2,566
Italian American	10.2	2,610
Polish American	9.3	2,701

Source: Kerr, The Chicano Experience in Chicago. p.136-137

condoned. According to the available evidence, the Mexican community responded in an uproar. Vida Latina led the vanguard by featuring a scathing editorial which condemned the bias and slanted coverage of Chicago's Mexican communities.[389] Letters of protest were also sent by the Mexican American Council, the American Legion "Manuel Perez Post 1017", and a concerned Chicano resident.[390]

These antagonisms set the scenario for the impending Mexican immigrant disaster - "Operation Wetback." Highly repressive in nature, the stated purpose of this military-like campaign was to "round up an unprecedented number of illegal Mexican aliens."[391] During its peak year, 1954, "Operation Wetback" successfully apprehended over 1 million undocumented Mexicans.[392] Though the country generally favored this massive purging some opposition did arise. Sugar beet and agricultural lobbyists with vested economic interest in the Mexican worker argued that "Mexican labor was as necessary...in the fifties as in the twenties."[393] Interestingly, Chicago's Vida Latina chose to encourage deportation by advising their "illegal" constituents to voluntarily turn themselves in.[394]

It has been suggested that the years from approximately World War II through 1954 was a period of "aborted" Chicano assimilation.[395] Utilizing this type of terminology, it would seem that the wholesale conception of Mexican and "American" culture never fertilized.

Undoubtedly the war both renewed and enlarged the scope of opportunities available to the Mexican immigrant. Necessitated by the war effort, this seemingly liberal treatment of Mexicans was only a temporary facade. Soon after the war, the U. S. government saw it no longer necessary to woo the Mexican government's demands of fair and equal treatment

of its citizens. As a result, countless infractions of the "bracero" program were incurred. The ending of the war also saw the necessity of placing returning veterans into the job market; in effect re-establishing the hierarchy of the Anglo-worker. In this era of post-war adjustment and their ensuing difficulties, Mexicans were once again perceived as scape-goats. As stated earlier, these antagonisms culminated in the oppressively cruel and harassing "Operation Wetback," In addition, the incessant flow of Mexican immigration through this period insured the constant rejuvenation of relatively "pure" Mexican culture.

Therefore, excepting the brief overtures of the wartime period, Anglo-America never really offered her wholehearted acceptance of Mexicanos and Chicanos into mainstream society. Furthermore, the flow of Mexican labor had been renewed on the basis of "temporary war workers," and therefore these immigrants did not come ready nor prepared to embrace the values and virtues of American society. In sum, only a small percentage of "Mexican Americans" had a vision of becoming full-fledged, bona-fide Americans; as such the "assimilation aborted" model cannot be representative of the Mexicano/Chicano experience in Chicago.

In spite of this nationwide campaign to deport Mexicans, immigration persisted, both legal and extra-legal. In Chicago this influx caused the borders of the Hull House "colonia" to expand. Moving southward, Mexicans began filtering into the nearby 18th Street area. In many ways this community (Pilsen) was as old and rundown as the Hull House community. In terms of age, Abbott's 1932 study revealed that 100% of the buildings in Pilsen were erected prior to 1902.[396] In addition, the predominating tenement structures of this area predisposed it to overcrowding and high

population density. In Pilsen, Abbott reported:

> ...the average brick tenement is somewhat larger than in other sections. Here approximately one-half of the buildings had five or more apartments in comparison with 14 percent for all the districts, and one-tenth had seven or more in comparison with 3.4 percent for all districts.[397]

This movement of Mexicans from the Hull House area to the 18th Street community was not begun in the fifties. Throughout the twenties, researchers noted the already expanding parameters of Chicago's near west side Mexican community. The meticulous study done by Paul Taylor defined this Mexican community as bounded by Canal, Madison, Ashland and 16th.[398] Another contemporary researcher, Anita Jones, observed in her 1928 study:

> In the blocks bounded by Western Avenue, Robey Street, Eighteenth and Twenty-second Street there is a group of Mexican homes.[399]

In addition she noted:

> Near Eighteenth and Jefferson Streets there are Mexican homes scattered thru one and two blocks.[400]

In 1931, the Jones and Wilson study defined the near west side Mexican Community as centering around Halsted between Harrison and 15th.[401] In 1925 a medical study of Mexicans in Chicago enumerated a total of 12 settlements, including one located on, "Fourteenth street from the river west to Ashland Avenue."[402] Another indicator of the Mexican presence in the 18th Street area is evident in the 1935 utilization of a Pilsen-located settlement house by a Mexican club - "El Club Educativo Benito Juarez."[403] The sum total of the above cited examples testify to the pre-fifties habitation of Mexicans in or near the 18th Street community. Therefore when Mexicans in the Hull House area were forced to relocate many chose the logical move to the nearby 18th Street community.

Thru the fifties, urban renewal and the building of expressways succeeded in excising large chunks of the Mexican population out of the Hull House area. The final coup de grace was the selection of the Hull House area as the site for a new University of Illinois campus. According to one observer, the eastern portion of this campus decimated an entire Mexican section.[404] Interestingly while large segments of the Hull House community were in an uproar, the Mexican Chamber of Commerce belittled protest activities as being "foolish demonstrations."[405] Instead, they proposed displaced businesses should band together and with state support work to "build a block-or-two square with shops, plaza, almost a replica of a Mexican town."[406]

Therefore the late fifties and early sixties was a period marked by the translocation of Chicago's largest Mexican community from the Hull House area to the 18th Street (Pilsen) community. Signifying this change was the movement of the magazine, Vida Latina, from a Hull House location to the very heart of the 18th Street community.

The fifties also witnessed the arrival of larger numbers of Puerto Ricans to Chicago. In 1957, one source estimated that 500 Puerto Ricans were arriving monthly.[407] This dramatic influx of Puerto Ricans to Chicago was made consciously evident in 1956 when the Caballeros de San Juan organized the First Annual San Juan Fiesta. Highlighting these festivities was a mass in which:

> Most of the important civic and political leaders of the State were present: Lieutenant Governor Chapman, Senator Everett Dirksen, Senator Paul Douglas, Mayor Richard J. Daley, Doña Felisa Rincoń (Mayoress of San Juan), many judges and other distinguished people.[408]

Several years later the Chicago Sun-Times announced that the Caballeros de San Juan were the largest Spanish-speaking organization in the Midwest.[409]

In general, entry of large numbers of Puerto Ricans into Chicago was marked by their public recognition as an ethnic American group. Though this minor concession did little to alleviate the serious problems of the Puerto Rican community, it is significant that overtures of this nature were not parallel to the Mexican's initial large scale migration to Chicago.

In sum, the fifties heralded two outstanding phenomena. Immigration from Mexico continued thereby expanding and enlarging the size and shape of the Hull House Mexican community. Catalyzing this action was the targeting of the Hull House area for a new university campus, thereby prompting the immediate and mass exodus to the 18th Street community. Simultaneously, large numbers of Puerto Ricans began arriving in Chicago, creating their own viable community, geographically apart from the Mexican community. Paradoxical to the Mexican experience, Puerto Ricans were congenially received by the City's public officials. Certainly Chicago's Mayor Daley's strain of ethnic politics accounts for some of these actions. Perhaps the answer lies in the greater voting power of Puerto Ricans. Nonetheless this ambiguous stand by city officials serves to highlight the near opposite reaction accorded to the Mexican of the twenties. Therefore it is within this context that one can begin to closely examine those powerful forces which have largely controlled and manipulated the Mexican community.

CHAPTER VIII

Conclusion: 1978 - Towards a Better Understanding of "La Communidad"

Immigration from Mexico to the 18th and 26th Street communities is not an anachronism. This constant flow of Mexicanos has resulted in the expansion of the community's borders. To some white homeowners this phenomenon has been perceived as a threat to their hegemony. Furthermore, the majority of Chicagoans are either ignorant of this dramatically increasing population, or are complacent knowing that the city's Mexicans are confined to certain geographical boundaries.

Racism, prejudices and discrimination have not ceased to exist, at times they have gone underground, but they are nonetheless a salient condition. This endemic bias towards the Mexican is evident in the generally accepted perception of classifying La Communidad as a problem area. Undoubtedly numerous problems do plague the community. Among others, they include inadequate housing, disinterest in education, drugs and crime. Yet one must be careful not to blame the victim. The Mexican did not perpetuate these undesirable conditions; dominant society thru its actions has created those inhuman conditions which he himself criticizes.

The purpose of this paper was not merely to present historical data, per se; more importantly thru the Mexican immigrant's previous experiences we can see that his precedental reception was one filled with exploitation, ostracizement and eventual expulsion from this country. Prior to the depression and after World War II, the Mexicano/Chicano was on the brink of wholesale upward mobility. Each time he was ruthlessly

struck down. In the first instance repatriation was the medium, the second was accomplished via "Operation Wetback." Presently, "La Communidad" is undergoing these same harassments and repressive actions. Immigration authorities have unmitigatingly raided our homes, places of employment and social gathering areas. The Anglo media has compounded this problem by running sensationalized reports thereby perpetuating the image of the Mexican community as being full of "illegals" and "wetbacks."

Today the 18th and 26th Street community is composed of a complex array of Mexicans. Second, third and fourth generation Chicanos can be found living and working alongside the recently arrived Mexicano. In essense, "La Communidad" is a collage of Mexicanos, Chicanos, Tejanos, and "Mexican-Americans." Nonetheless, the majority of "La Communidad's" inhabitants are culturally Mexicano. The continual flow of immigration from Mexico has insured the inculcation of relatively "pure" culture. In addition, Chicago's geographical isolation from Mexico can perhaps explain why Chicago's Mexican communities are more "Mexican" than similarly populated southwestern towns. These aforementioned statements are derived basically from my observations as a 20 year resident of "La Communidad," located in the Hull House, 18th Street and 26th Street communities.

As the population of "La Communidad" increases, and its boundaries begin to contract, the Anglo media and the City of Chicago will "awaken" to find in her midst an incredibly large Mexican community. Perhaps then, the city will respond to the dire needs of "La Communidad." Yet, one cannot wait to be "discovered." The Mexican people have lived in Chicago for over 60 years. Therefore we have the right to demand that City

officials take proper actions to ameliorate our community's numerous "problems." Proper and adequate health care, education and delivery of public services are especially wanton.

As Chicago's Mexican population matures and grows so will its voting power. Via birthright and naturalization, Mexicans in the not-too-far off future will organize a formidable voting bloc, thereby utilizing political leverage to wrest needed concessions. This area's first Mexicano Alderman is only a few election years away. Therefore, the City of Chicago must take notice of its Mexican people. No longer can they choose to ignore the complaints, needs and voting potential of its Mexican residents.

In essence, the Mexican immigrant experience to Chicago has been one subject to the complex machinations of the urban midwest. It is within this context of Urban History that we can begin to better understand the historical experience of Mexicans in Chicago. Research in this area is virtually non-existent and therefore should warrant considerable attention as a subject for future studies.

Though microscopic in nature, I have attempted to bring in other ethnic groups, including: Blacks, Italians, Puerto Ricans and Poles. It is within this comparative framework that urban historians begin to analyze and examine the history of Mexicans in Chicago. Certainly his experience did not occur in a vacuum, yet he was distinct from other immigrant groups. Neither White nor Black, he was relegated to a racial and ethnic limbo. This dilemma was accentuated by the Mexican who did not want to be considered either White or Black. As a proud member of "La Raza" I see no ambiguity in this stand. The time has arrived for

American society to quit trying to categorize us, it is all in vain, for we are Mexicanos.

FOOTNOTES

1. While several dated words have dealt with Mexicanos in the Hull House area, the only known research of 18th Street has been conducted by Louise A. Kerr, The Chicano Experience In Chicago: 1920-1970. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1976, p. 191-204.

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3. Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, Chicago Public Library Omnibus Project Chicago,1942, p. 11.

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5. Edith Abbott, Tenements of Chicago, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1936, p. 18.

6. Abbott, p. 83.

7. Abbott, p. 203.

8. Abbott, p. 81, 83.

9. Jim Faught, Estevan Flores and Gilberto Cardenas, A Profile Of The Spanish Language Population In The Little Village and Pilsen Community Areas Of Chicago, Illinois, And Population Projections 1970-1980. Centro de Estudios Chicanos e Investigaciones Sociales, Inc., 1975, p. 13

10. Ibid., p. 17, 60.

11. City of Chicago, Department of Development and Planning, Chicago Spanish Speaking Population: Selected Statistics, Chicago: City of Chicago, 1973.

12. Ibid., p. 1.

13. Faught, Flores and Cardenas, p. 59.

14. Ibid.

15. Mark Reisler, By The Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Emigrant Labor into the United States, 1900-1940, Wesport: Greenwood Press, 1976, p. 13.

16. Anita E. Jones, Conditions Surrounding Mexicans In Chicago, Master's Thesis, University of Chicago, 1928. San Francisco: R and E Associates, p. 7.

17. Reisler, By The Sweat of Their Brow, p. 12.

18. Julian Samora, Los Mojados: The Wetback Story, South Bend: University of Notre Dame, 1971, p. 34-35.

19. Interview with Maria de Jesus Pulido-Medel, May 28, 1975. Chicago, Illinois.

20. Reisler, By The Sweat of Their Brow, See Chapter 2,"World War I Temporary Admissions Program", p. 49-76.

21. Reisler, By The Sweat of Their Brow, p. 35.

22. Francisco Rosales, Mexican Immigration to the Urban Midwest During The 1920's The Case of East Chicago, Indiana, Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1977, p. 14.

23. Ibid., p. 16.

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